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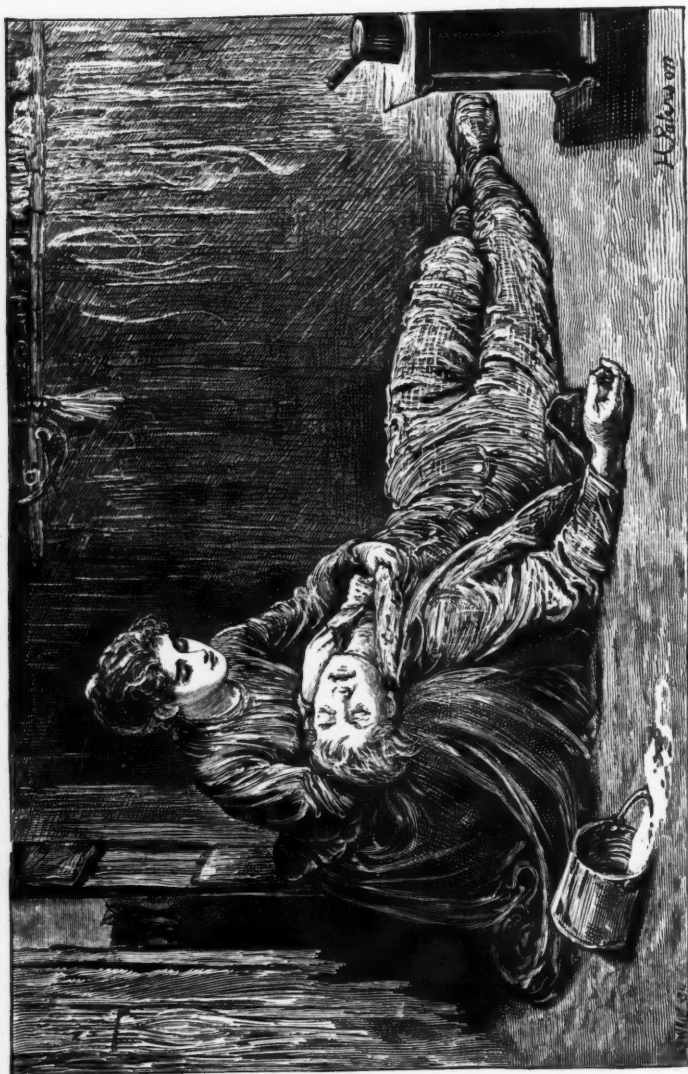
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VOL. XXIX.
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1874.



HANDS WERE LOOSENING HIS NECKERCHIEF.

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JANUARY, 1874.

Far from the Madding Crowd.

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTION OF FARMER OAK: AN INCIDENT.



WHEN Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to mere chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.

His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character. On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to a postponing treatment of

things, whose best clothes and seven-and-six-penny umbrella were always hampering him: upon the whole, one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the Sacrament people of the parish and the drunken division of its inhabitants

—that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene creed, and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon. Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture.

Since he lived six times as many working days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own—the mental picture formed by his neighbours always presenting him as dressed in that way when their imaginations answered to the thought "Gabriel Oak." He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's, his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing about it—their maker being a conscientious man who always endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity.

Mr. Oak carried about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with the greatest precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, when it always went on again immediately, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows when passing by their houses, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced timekeepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob being painfully difficult of access by reason of its somewhat high situation in the waist-band of his trousers (which also lay at a remote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body extremely to one side, compressing the mouth and face to a mere mass of wrinkles on account of the exertion required, and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well.

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning—sunny and exceedingly mild—might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood: there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing, had they been exhibited with due considera-

tion. But there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike—for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew—a way of cur-tailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them; and from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal, which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly, and with a faintly perceptible bend, quite distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation as a total more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not. He had just reached the time of life at which "young" is ceasing to be the prefix of "man" in speaking of one. He was at the brightest period of masculine life, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated: he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and family. In short, he was twenty-eight, and a bachelor.

The field he was in sloped steeply to a ridge called Norcombe Hill. Through a spur of this hill ran the highway from Norcombe to Caster-bridge, sunk in a deep cutting. Casually glancing over the hedge, Oak saw coming down the incline before him an ornamental spring waggon, painted yellow and gaily marked, drawn by two horses, a waggoner walking alongside bearing a whip perpendicularly. The waggon was laden with household goods and window-plants, and on the apex of the whole sat a woman, young and attractive. Gabriel had not beheld the sight for more than half a minute, when the vehicle was brought to a standstill just beneath his eyes.

"The tailboard of the waggon is gone, Miss," said the waggoner.

"Then I heard it fall," said the girl, in a soft, though not particularly low voice. "I heard a noise I could not account for when we were coming up the hill."

"I'll run back."

"Do," she answered.

The sensible horses stood perfectly still, and the waggoner's steps sank fainter and fainter in the distance.

The girl on the summit of the load sat motionless, surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs upwards, backed by an oak settle, and ornamented in front by pots of geraniums, myrtles, and cactuses, together with a caged canary—all probably from the windows of the house just vacated. There was also a cat in a willow basket, from the partly-opened lid of which she gazed with half-closed eyes, and affectionately surveyed the small birds around.

The handsome girl waited for some time idly in her place, and the only sound heard in the stillness was the hopping of the canary up and down the perches of its prison. Then she looked attentively downwards. It was not at the bird, nor at the cat; it was at an oblong package tied

in paper, and lying between them. She turned her head to learn if the waggoner were coming. He was not yet in sight; and then her eyes crept back to the package, her thoughts seeming to run upon what was inside it. At length she drew the article into her lap, and untied the paper covering; a small swing looking-glass was disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. Then she parted her lips and smiled.

It was a fine morning, and the sun lighted up to a scarlet glow the crimson jacket she wore, and painted a soft lustre upon her bright face and black hair. The myrtles, geraniums, and cactuses packed around her were fresh and green, and at such a leafless season they invested the whole concern of horses, waggon, furniture, and girl with a peculiar charm of rarity. What possessed her to indulge in such a performance in the sight of the sparrows, blackbirds, and unperceived farmer, who were alone its spectators—whether the smile began as a factitious one, to test her capacity in that art, nobody knows; it ended certainly in a real smile. She blushed at herself, and seeing her reflection blush, blushed the more.

The change from the customary spot and necessary occasion of such an act—from the dressing hour in a bedroom to a time of travelling out of doors—lent to the idle deed a novelty it certainly did not intrinsically possess. The picture was a delicate one. Woman's prescriptive infirmity had stalked into the sunlight, which had invested it with the freshness of an originality. A cynical inference was irresistible by Gabriel Oak as he regarded the scene, generous though he fain would have been. There was no necessity whatever for her looking in the glass. She did not adjust her hat, or pat her hair, or press a dimple into shape, or do one thing to signify that any such intention had been her motive in taking up the glass. She simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in a feminine direction, her expressions seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part—vistas of probable triumphs—the smiles being of a phase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost and won. Still, this was but conjecture, and the whole series of actions were so idly put forth as to make it rash to assert that intention had any part in them at all.

The waggoner's steps were heard returning. She put the glass in the paper, and the whole again into its place.

When the waggon had passed on, Gabriel withdrew from his point of espial, and descending into the road, followed the vehicle to the turn-pike-gate at the bottom of the hill, where the object of his contemplation now halted for the payment of toll. About twenty steps still remained between him and the gate, when he heard a dispute. It was a difference concerning twopence between the persons with the waggon and the man at the toll-bar.

"Mis'ess's niece is upon the top of the things, and she says that's enough that I've offered ye, you grate miser, and she won't pay any more." These were the waggoner's words.

"Very well; then mis'ess's niece can't pass," said the turnpike-keeper, closing the gate.

Oak looked from one to the other of the disputants, and fell into a reverie. There was something in the tone of twopence remarkably insignificant. Threepence had a definite value as money—it was an appreciable infringement on a day's wages, and, as such, a higgling matter; but twopence—"Here," he said, stepping forward and handing twopence to the gatekeeper; "let the young woman pass." He looked up at her then; she heard his words, and looked down.

Gabriel's features adhered throughout their form so exactly to the middle line between the beauty of St. John and the ugliness of Judas Iscariot, as represented in a window of the church he attended, that not a single lineament could be selected and called worthy either of distinction or notoriety. The red-jacketed and dark-haired maiden seemed to think so too, for she carelessly glanced over him, and told her man to drive on. She might have looked her thanks to Gabriel on a minute scale, but she did not speak them; more probably she felt none, for in gaining her a passage he had lost her her point, and we know how women take a favour of that kind.

The gatekeeper surveyed the retreating vehicle. "That's a handsome maid," he said to Oak.

"But she has her faults," said Gabriel.

"True, farmer."

"And the greatest of them is—well, what it is always."

"Beating people down; ay, 'tis so."

"Oh no."

"What, then?"

Gabriel, perhaps a little piqued by the comely traveller's indifference, glanced back to where he had witnessed her performance over the hedge, and said "Vanity."

CHAPTER II.

NIGHT: THE FLOCK: AN INTERIOR: ANOTHER INTERIOR.

It was nearly midnight on the eve of St. Thomas's, the shortest day in the year. A desolating wind wandered from the north over the hill whereon Oak had watched the yellow waggon and its occupant in the sunshine of a few days earlier.

Norcombe Hill—forming part of Norcombe Ewelease—was one of the spots which suggest to a passer-by that he is in the presence of a shape approaching the indestructible as nearly as any to be found on earth. It was a featureless convexity of chalk and soil—an ordinary specimen of those smoothly outlined protuberances of the globe which may remain undisturbed on some great day of confusion, when far grander heights and dizzy granite precipices topple down.

The hill was covered on its northern side by an ancient and decaying plantation of beeches, whose upper verge formed a line over the crest, fringing its arched curve against the sky, like a mane. To-night these trees sheltered the southern slope from the keenest blasts, which smote the wood and floundered through it with a sound as of grumbling, or gushed over its crowning boughs in a weakened moan. The dry leaves in the ditch simmered and boiled in the same breezes, a tongue of air occasionally ferreting out a few, and sending them spinning across the grass. A group or two of the latest in date amongst this dead multitude had remained on the twigs which bore them till this very mid-winter time, and in falling rattled against the trunks with smart taps.

Between this half-wooded, half-naked hill, and the vague still horizon its summit indistinctly commanded, was a mysterious sheet of fathomless shade—the sounds only from which suggested that what it concealed bore some humble resemblance to features here. The thin grasses, more or less coating the hill, were touched by the wind in breezes of differing powers and almost differing natures—one rubbing the blades heavily, another raking them piercingly, another brushing them like a soft broom. The instinctive act of human-kind here was to stand and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed or chaunted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir; how hedges and other shapes to leeward then caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gust then plunged into the south, to be heard no more.

The sky was clear—remarkably clear—and the twinkling of all the stars seemed to be but throbs of one body, timed by a common pulse. The North star was directly in the wind's eye, and since evening the Bear had swung round it outwardly to the east, till it was now at a right angle with the meridian. A difference of colour in the stars—oftener read of than seen in England—was really perceptible here. The kingly brilliancy of Sirius pierced the eye with a steely glitter, the star called Capella was yellow, Aldebaran and Betelgueux shone with a fiery red.

To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by a fancy that the better outlook upon space afforded by a hill emphasises terrestrial revolution, or by the wind, or by the solitude; but whatever be its origin, the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, first enlarging the consciousness with a sense of difference from the mass of civilized mankind, who are horizontal and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre among these astral clusters, aloft from the customary haunts of thought and vision, some men may feel raised to a capability for eternity at once.

Suddenly an unexpected series of sounds began to be heard in this place up against the sky. They had a clearness which was to be found nowhere in the wind, and a sequence which was to be found nowhere in nature. They were the notes of Farmer Oak's flute.

The tune was not floating unhindered into the open air, but it seemed muffled in some way, and was altogether too curtailed in power to spread high or wide. It came from the direction of a small dark object under the plantation hedge—a shepherd's hut now presenting an outline to which an uninitiated person might have been puzzled to attach either meaning or use.

The image as a whole was that of a small Noah's Ark on a small Ararat, allowing the traditional outlines and general form of the Ark which are followed by toymakers, and by these means are established in men's imaginations among their firmest, because earliest impressions, to pass as an approximate pattern. The hut stood on small wheels, which raised its floor about a foot from the ground. Such shepherds' huts are dragged into the fields when the lambing season comes on, to shelter the shepherd in his enforced nightly attendance.

It was only latterly that people had begun to call Gabriel "Farmer" Oak. During the twelvemonth preceding this time he had been enabled by sustained efforts of industry and chronic good spirits to lease the small sheep-farm of which Norcombe Hill was a portion, and stock it with two hundred sheep. Previously he had been a bailiff for a short time, and earlier still a shepherd only, having from his childhood assisted his father in tending the flocks of large proprietors, till old Gabriel sank to rest.

This venture, unaided and alone, into the paths of farming as master and not as man, with an advance of sheep not yet paid for, was a critical juncture with Gabriel Oak, and he recognized his position clearly. The first movement in his new progress was the lambing of his ewes, and sheep having been his speciality from his youth, he wisely refrained from deputing the task of tending them at this season to a hireling or a novice.

The wind continued to beat about the corners of the hut, but the flute-playing ceased. A rectangular space of light appeared in the side of the hut, and in the opening the outline of Farmer Oak's figure. He carried a lantern in his hand, and closing the door behind him, came forward and busied himself about this nook of the field for nearly twenty minutes, the lantern light appearing and disappearing here and there, and brightening him or darkening him as he stood before or behind it.

Oak's motions, though they had a quiet energy, were slow, and their deliberateness accorded well with his occupation. Fitness being the basis of all beauty, nobody could have denied that his steady swings and turns in and about the flock had elements of grace. Yet, although if occasion demanded he could do or think a thing with as mercurial a dash as can the men of towns who are more to the manner born, his special power, morally, physically, and mentally, was static, owing little or nothing to momentum, as a rule.

A close examination of the ground hereabout, even by the wan star-light only, revealed how a portion of what would have been casually called a wild slope had been appropriated by Farmer Oak for his great purpose this winter. Detached hurdles thatched with straw were stuck into the ground at various scattered points, amid and under which the whitish forms of his meek ewes moved and rustled. The ring of the sheep-bell, which had been silent during his absence, recommenced, in tones which had more mellowness than clearness owing to an increasing growth of surrounding wool, and continued till Oak withdrew again from the flock. He returned to the hut, bringing in his arms a new-born lamb, consisting of four legs large enough for a full-grown sheep, united by an unimportant membrane about half the substance of the legs collectively, which constituted the animal's entire body just at present.

The little speck of life he placed on a wisp of hay before the small stove, where a can of milk was simmering. Oak extinguished the lantern by blowing into it with pouted lips, and then pinching out the snuff, the cot being lighted by a candle suspended by a twisted wire. A rather hard couch, formed of a few corn sacks thrown carelessly down, covered half the floor of this little habitation, and here the young man stretched himself along, loosened his woollen cravat, and closed his eyes. In about the time a person unaccustomed to bodily labour would have decided upon which side to lie, Farmer Oak was asleep.

The inside of this hut, as it now presented itself, was cosy and alluring, and the scarlet handful of fire in addition to the candle, reflecting its own genial colour upon whatever it could reach, flung associations of enjoyment even over utensils and tools. In the corner stood the sheep-crook, and along a shelf at one side were ranged bottles and canisters of the simple preparations pertaining to ovine surgery and physic; spirits of wine, turpentine, tar, magnesia, ginger, and castor-oil being the chief. On a triangular shelf across the corner stood bread, bacon, cheese, and a cup for ale or cider, which was supplied from a flagon beneath. Beside the provisions lay the flute, whose notes had lately been called forth by the lonely watcher to beguile a tedious hour. The house was ventilated by two round holes, like the lights of a cabin, with wood slides.

The lamb, revived by the warmth, began to bleat, and the sound entered Gabriel's ears and brain with an instant meaning, as expected sounds will. Passing from the profoundest sleep to the most alert wakefulness with the same ease that had accompanied the reverse operation, he looked at his watch, found that the hour-hand had shifted again, put on his hat, took the lamb in his arms, and carried it into the darkness. After placing the little creature with its mother, he stood and carefully examined the sky, to ascertain the time of night from the altitudes of the stars.

The Dog-star and Aldebaran pointing to the restless Pleiades were half way up the Southern sky, and beneath them hung Orion, which gorgeous constellation never burnt more vividly than now, as it swung itself

forth above the rim of the landscape. Castor and Pollux with their quiet shine almost rested on the ground: the barren and gloomy Square of Pegasus was creeping round to the north-west; far away through the plantation, Vega sparkled like a lamp suspended amid the leafless trees, and Cassiopeia's chair stood daintily poised on the uppermost boughs.

"One o'clock," said Gabriel.

Being a man not without a frequent consciousness that there was some beauty in this life he led, he stood still after looking at the sky as a useful instrument, and regarded it in an appreciative spirit, as a work of art superlatively beautiful. For a moment he seemed impressed with the speaking loneliness of the scene, or rather with the complete abstraction from all its compass of the sights and sounds of man. Human shapes, interferences, troubles, and joys were all as if they were not, and there seemed to be on the shaded hemisphere of the globe no sentient being save himself; he could fancy them all gone round to the sunny side.

Occupied thus, with eyes stretched afar, Oak gradually perceived that what he had previously taken to be a star low down behind the outskirts of the plantation was in reality no such thing. It was an artificial light, almost close at hand.

To find themselves utterly alone at night where company is desirable and expected makes some people fearful; but a case more trying by far to the nerves is to discover some mysterious companionship when intuition, sensation, memory, analogy, testimony, probability, induction—every kind of evidence in the logician's list—have united to persuade consciousness that it is quite alone.

Farmer Oak went towards the plantation and pushed through its lower boughs to the windy side. A dim mass under the slope reminded him that a shed occupied a place here, the site being a cutting into the slope of the hill, so that at its back part the roof was almost level with the ground. In front it was formed of boards nailed to posts and covered with tar as a preservative. Through crevices in the roof and side spread streaks and dots of light, a combination of which made up the radiance that had attracted him. Oak stepped up behind, where, leaning down upon the roof and putting his eye close to a hole, he could see into the interior clearly.

The place contained two women and two cows. By the side of the latter a steaming bran-mash stood in a bucket. One of the women was past middle age. Her companion was apparently young and graceful; he could form no decided opinion upon her looks, her position being almost beneath his eye, so that he saw her in a bird's-eye aerial view, as Satan first saw Paradise. She wore no bonnet or hat, but had enveloped herself in a large cloak, which was carelessly flung over her head as a covering.

"There, now we'll go home," said the elder of the two, resting her knuckles upon her hips, and looking at their goings-on as a whole. "I do hope Daisy will fetch round again now. I have never been more frightened in my life, but I don't mind breaking my rest if she recovers."

The young woman, whose eyelids were apparently inclined to fall together on the smallest provocation of silence, yawned without parting her lips to any inconvenient extent, whereupon Gabriel caught the infection and slightly yawned in sympathy. "I wish we were rich enough to pay a man to do these things," she said.

"As we are not, we must do them ourselves," said the other; "for you must help me if you stay."

"Well, my hat is gone, however," continued the younger. "It went over the hedge, I think. The idea of such a slight wind catching it."

The cow standing erect was of the Devon breed, and was encased in a tight warm hide of rich Indian red, as absolutely uniform from eyes to tail as if the animal had been dipped in a dye of that colour, her long back being mathematically level. The other was spotted, grey and white. Beside her, Oak now noticed a little calf about a day old, looking idiotically at the two women, which showed that it had not long been accustomed to the phenomenon of eyesight, and often turning to the lantern, which it apparently mistook for the moon, inherited instinct having as yet had little time for correction by experience. Between the sheep and the cows, Lucina had been busy on Norcombe Hill lately.

"I think we had better send for some oatmeal," said the elder woman; "there's no more bran."

"Yes, aunt; and I'll ride over for it as soon as it is light."

"But there's no side-saddle."

"I can ride on the other: trust me."

Oak, upon hearing these remarks became more curious to observe her features, but this prospect being denied him by the hooding effect of the cloak, and by her forehead coming in the way of what the cloak did not cover, he felt himself drawing upon his fancy for their details. In making even horizontal and clear inspections, we colour and mould according to the wants within us whatever our eyes bring in. Had Gabriel been able from the first to get a distinct view of her countenance, his estimate of it as very handsome or slightly so would have been as his soul required a divinity at the moment or was ready supplied with one. Having for some time known the want of a satisfactory form to fill an increasing void within him, his position moreover affording the widest scope for his fancy, he painted her a beauty.

By one of those whimsical coincidences in which Nature, like a busy mother, seems to spare a moment from her unremitting labours to turn and make her children smile, the girl now dropped the cloak, and forth tumbled ropes of black hair over a red jacket. Oak knew her instantly as the heroine of the yellow waggon, myrtles, and looking-glass: prosily, as the woman who owed him twopence.

They placed the calf beside its mother again, took up the lantern, and went out, the light sinking down the hill till it was no more than a nebula. Gabriel Oak returned to his flock.

CHAPTER III.

A GIRL ON HORSEBACK: CONVERSATION.

THE sluggish day began to break. Even its position terrestrially is one of the elements of a new interest, and for no particular reason save that the incident of the night had occurred there, Oak went again into the plantation. Lingering and musing here, he heard the steps of a horse at the foot of the hill, and soon there appeared in view an auburn pony with a girl on its back, ascending by the path leading past the cattle-shed. She was the young woman of the night before. Gabriel instantly thought of the hat she had mentioned as having lost in the wind; possibly she had come to look for it. He hastily scanned the ditch, and after walking about ten yards along it, found the hat among the leaves. Gabriel took it in his hand and returned to his hut. Here he ensconced himself, and looked through the loophole in the direction of the rider's approach.

She came up and looked around—then on the other side of the hedge. Gabriel was about to advance and restore the missing article, when an unexpected performance induced him to suspend the action for the present. The path after passing the cowshed bisected the plantation. It was not a bridle-path—merely a pedestrian's track, and the boughs spread horizontally at a height not greater than seven feet above the ground, which made it impossible to ride erect beneath them. The girl, who wore no riding-habit, looked around for a moment as if to assure herself that all humanity was out of view, then dexterously dropped backwards flat upon the pony's back, her head over its tail, her feet against its shoulder, and her eyes to the sky. The rapidity of her glide into this position was that of a kingfisher—its noiselessness that of a hawk. Gabriel's eyes had scarcely been able to follow her. The tall lank pony seemed used to such phenomena, and ambled along unconcerned. Thus she passed under the level boughs.

The performer seemed quite at home anywhere between a horse's head and its tail, and the necessity for this abnormal attitude having ceased with the passage of the plantation, she began to adopt another, even more obviously convenient than the first. She had no side-saddle, and it was very apparent that a firm seat upon the smooth leather beneath her was unattainable sideways. Springing to her accustomed perpendicular like a bowed sapling, and satisfying herself that nobody was in sight, she seated herself in the manner demanded by the saddle, though hardly expected of the woman, and trotted off in the direction of Tewnell Mill.

Oak was amused, perhaps a little astonished, and hanging up the hat in his hut, went again among his ewes. An hour passed, the girl returned, properly seated now, with a bag of bran in front of her. On nearing the cattle-shed she was met by a boy bringing a milking-pail, who held the reins of the pony whilst she slid off. The boy led away the horse, leaving the pail with the young woman.

Soon a soft spirt, alternating with a loud spirt, came in regular succession from within the shed. They were the sounds of a person milking a cow. Gabriel took the lost hat in his hand, and waited beside the path she would follow in leaving the hill.

She came, the pail in one hand, hanging against her knee. The left arm was extended as a balance, enough of it being shown bare to make Oak wish that the event had happened in summer, when the whole would have been revealed. There was a bright air and manner about her now, by which she seemed to imply that the desirability of her existence could not be questioned; and this rather saucy assumption failed in being offensive, because a beholder felt it to be, upon the whole, true. Like exceptional emphasis in the tone of a genius, that which would have made mediocrity ridiculous was an addition to recognized power. It was with some surprise that she saw Gabriel's face rising like the moon, behind the hedge.

The adjustment of the farmer's hazy conceptions of her charms to the portrait of herself she now presented him with, was less a diminution than a difference. The starting-point selected by the judgment was her height. She seemed tall, but the pail was a small one, and the hedge diminutive; hence, making allowance for error by comparison with these, she could have been not above the height to be chosen by women as best. All features of consequence were severe and regular. It may have been observed by persons who go about the shires with eyes for beauty, that in Englishwomen a classically formed face is seldom found to be united with a figure of the same pattern, the highly-finished features being generally too large for the remainder of the frame; that a graceful and proportionate figure of eight heads usually goes off into random facial curves. Without throwing a Nymphean tissue over a milkmaid, it must be said that here criticism checked itself in examining details to return to where it began, and looked at her proportions with a long consciousness of pleasure. From the contours of her figure in its upper part, she must have had a beautiful neck and shoulders; but it may be stated that since her infancy nobody had ever seen them. Had she been put into a low dress she would have run and thrust her head into a bush. Yet she was not a shy girl by any means; it was merely her instinct to draw the line dividing the seen from the unseen higher than they do it in towns.

That the girl's thoughts hovered about her face and form as soon as she caught Oak's eyes conning the same page was natural, and almost certain. The self-consciousness shown would have been vanity if a little more pronounced, dignity if a little less. Rays of male vision seem to have a tickling effect upon virgin faces in rural districts; she hastily brushed hers with her hand, as if Gabriel had been irritating its pink surface with a long straw, and the free air of her previous movements was reduced at the same time to a chastened phase of itself. Yet it was the man who blushed, the maid not at all.

"I found a hat," said Oak.

"It is mine," said she, and, from a sense of proportion, kept down to a small smile an inclination to laugh distinctly; "it flew away last night."

"One o'clock this morning?"

"Well—it was." She was surprised. "How did you know?" she said.

"I was here."

"You are Farmer Oak, are you not?"

"That or thereabouts. I'm lately come to this place."

"A large farm?" she inquired, casting her eyes around, and swinging back her hair, which was black in the shaded hollows of its mass; but it being now an hour past sunrise, the rays touched its prominent curves with a colour of their own.

"No; not large. About a hundred." (In speaking of farms the word "acres" is omitted by the natives, by analogy with such old expressions as "a stag of ten.")

"I wanted my hat this morning," she went on. "I had to ride to Townell Mill."

"Yes, you had."

"How do you know?"

"I saw you."

"Where?" she inquired, a misgiving bringing every muscle of her lineaments and frame to a standstill.

"Here—going through the plantation, and all down the hill," said Farmer Oak, with an aspect excessively knowing with regard to some matter in his mind, as he gazed at a remote point in the direction named, and then turned back to meet his colloquist's eyes.

A perception caused him to withdraw his own from hers as suddenly as if he had been caught in a theft. Recollection of the strange antics she had indulged in when passing through the trees, was succeeded in the girl by a nettled palpitation, and that by a hot face. It was a time to see a woman reddened who was not given to reddening as a rule; not a point in the milkmaid but was of the deepest rose-colour. From the Maiden's Blush, through all varieties of the Provence down to the Crimson Tuscany, the countenance of Oak's acquaintance quickly graduated; whereupon he, in consideration, had turned away his head.

The sympathetic man still looked the other way, and wondered when she would recover whiteness sufficient to justify him in facing her again. He heard what seemed to be the flitting of a dead leaf upon the breeze, and looked. She had gone away.

With an air between that of Tragedy and Comedy, Gabriel returned to his work.

Five mornings and evenings passed. The young woman came regularly to milk the healthy cow or to attend to the sick one, but never allowed her vision to stray in the direction of Oak's person. His want of tact had deeply offended her—not by seeing what he could not help, but by letting her know that he had seen it. For, as without law there is

no sin, without eyes there is no indecorum; and she appeared to feel that Gabriel's espial had made her an indecorous woman without her own connivance. It was food for great regret with him; it was also a contretemps which touched into life a latent heat he had experienced in that direction.

The acquaintanceship might, however, have ended in a slow forgetting, but for an incident which occurred at the end of the same week. One afternoon it began to freeze, and the frost increased with evening, which drew on like a stealthy tightening of bonds. It was a time when in cottages the breath of the sleepers freezes to the sheets, when round the drawing-room fire of a thick-walled mansion the sitters' backs are cold even whilst their faces are all aglow. Many a small bird went to bed superfluous that night among the bare boughs.

As the milking-hour drew near, Oak kept his usual watch upon the cow-shed. At last he felt cold, and shaking an extra quantity of bedding round the yearning ewes, he entered the hut and heaped more fuel upon the stove. The wind came in at the bottom of the door, to prevent which Oak wheeled the cot round a little more to the south. Then the wind spouted in at a ventilating hole—of which there was one on each side of the hut.

Gabriel had always known that when the fire was lighted and the door closed, one of these must be kept open—that chosen being always on the side away from the wind. Closing the slide to windward, he turned to open the other; on second thoughts, the farmer considered he would first sit down, leaving both closed for a minute or two, till the temperature of the hut was a little raised. He sat down.

His head began to ache in an unwonted manner, and, fancying himself weary by reason of the broken rests of the preceding nights, Oak decided to get up, open the slide, and then allow himself to fall asleep. He fell asleep without having performed the necessary preliminary.

How long he remained unconscious Gabriel never knew. During the first stages of his return to perception peculiar deeds seemed to be in course of enactment. His dog was howling, his head was aching fearfully—somebody was pulling him about, hands were loosening his neckerchief.

On opening his eyes, he found that evening had sunk to dusk, in a strange manner of unexpectedness. The young girl with the remarkably pleasant lips and white teeth was beside him. More than this—astonishingly more—his head was upon her lap, his face and neck were disagreeably wet, and her fingers were unbuttoning his collar.

"Whatever is the matter?" said Oak, vacantly.

She seemed to experience a sensation of mirth, but of too insignificant a kind to start the capacity of enjoyment.

"Nothing now," she answered, "since you are not dead. It was a wonder you were not suffocated in this hut of yours."

"Ah, the hut!" murmured Gabriel. "I gave ten pounds for that

hut. But I'll sell it, and sit under thatched hurdles as they did in old times, and curl up to sleep in a lock of straw! It played me nearly the same trick the other day!" Gabriel, by way of emphasis, brought down his fist upon the frozen ground.

"It was not exactly the fault of the hut," she observed, speaking in a tone which showed her to be that novelty among women—one who finished a thought before beginning the sentence which was to convey it. "You should, I think, have considered, and not have been so foolish as to leave the slides closed."

"Yes, I suppose I should," said Oak, absently. He was endeavouring to catch and appreciate the sensation of being thus with her—his head upon her dress—before the event passed on into the heap of bygone things. He wished she knew his impressions; but he would as soon have thought of carrying an odour in a net as of attempting to convey the intangibilities of his feeling in the coarse meshes of language. So he remained silent.

She made him sit up, and then Oak began wiping his face and shaking himself like a Samson. "How can I thank ye?" he said at last, gratefully, some of the natural rusty red having returned to his face.

"Oh, never mind that," said the girl, smiling, and allowing her smile to hold good for Gabriel's next remark, whatever that might prove to be.

"How did you find me?"

"I heard your dog howling and scratching at the door of the hut when I came to the milking (it was so lucky, Daisy's milking is almost over for the season, and I shall not come here after this week or the next). The dog saw me, and jumped over to me, and laid hold of my dress. I came across and looked round the hut the very first thing to see if the slides were closed. My uncle has a hut like this one, and I have heard him tell his shepherd not to go to sleep without leaving a slide open. I opened the door, and there you were like dead. I threw the milk over you, as there was no water, forgetting it was warm, and no use."

"I wonder if I should have died?" Gabriel said, in a low voice, which was rather meant to travel back to himself than on to her.

"Oh, no," the girl replied. She seemed to prefer a less tragic probability; to have saved a man from death involved talk that should harmonise with the dignity of such a deed—and she shunned it.

"I believe you saved my life, Miss—I don't know your name. I know your aunt's, but not yours."

"I would just as soon not tell it—rather not. There is no reason either why I should, as you probably will never have much to do with me."

"Still, I should like to know."

"You can inquire at my aunt's—she will tell you."

"My name is Gabriel Oak."

"And mine isn't. You seem fond of yours in speaking it so decisively, Gabriel Oak."

"You see, it is the only one I shall ever have, and I must make the most of it."

"I always think mine sounds odd and disagreeable."

"I should think you might soon get a new one."

"Mercy—how many opinions you keep about you concerning other people, Gabriel Oak."

"Well, Miss—excuse the words—I thought you would like them. But I can't match you, I know, in mapping out my mind upon my tongue as I may say. I never was very clever in my inside. But I thank you. Come, give me your hand!"

She hesitated, somewhat disconcerted at Oak's old-fashioned earnest conclusion to a dialogue lightly carried on. "Very well," she said, and gave him her hand, compressing her lips to a demure impassivity. He held it but an instant, and in his fear of being too demonstrative, swerved to the opposite extreme, touching her fingers with the lightness of a small-hearted person.

"I am sorry," he said, the instant after, regretfully.

"What for?"

"Letting your hand go so quickly."

"You may have me again if you like; there it is." She gave him her hand again.

Oak held it longer this time—indeed, curiously long. "How soft it is—being winter-time, too—not chapped or rough, or anything!" he said.

"There—that's long enough," said she, though without pulling it away. "But I suppose you are thinking you would like to kiss it? You may if you want to."

"I wasn't thinking of any such thing," said Gabriel, simply; "but I will—"

"That you won't!" She snatched back her hand.

Gabriel felt himself guilty of another want of tact.

"Now find out my name," she said teasingly; and withdrew.

CHAPTER IV.

GABRIEL'S RESOLVE—THE VISIT—THE MISTAKE.

THE only superiority in women that is tolerable to the rival sex is, as a rule, that of the unconscious kind, but a superiority which recognizes itself may sometimes please by suggesting at the same time possibilities of impropriation to the subordinated man.

This well-favoured and comely girl soon made appreciable inroads upon the emotional constitution of young Farmer Oak.

Love, being an extremely exacting usurer (a sense of exorbitant profit, spiritually, by an exchange of hearts, being at the bottom of pure passions, as that of exorbitant profit, bodily or materially, is at the bottom of those of lower atmosphere), every morning his feelings were as sensitive as

the money-market in calculations upon his chances. His dog waited for his meals in a way so like that in which Oak waited for the girl's presence that the farmer was quite struck with the resemblance, felt it lowering, and would not look at the dog. However, he continued to watch through the hedge at her regular coming, and thus his sentiments towards her were deepened without any corresponding effect being produced upon herself. Oak had nothing finished and ready to say as yet, and not being able to frame love-phrases which end where they begin; passionate tales—

—Full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing—

he said no word at all.

By making inquiries he found that the girl's name was Bathsheba Everdene, and that the cow would go dry in about seven days. He dreaded the eighth day.

At last the eighth day came. The cow had ceased to give milk for that year, and Bathsheba Everdene came up the hill no more. Gabriel had reached a pitch of existence he never could have anticipated a short time before. He liked saying "Bathsheba" as a private enjoyment instead of whistling; turned over his taste to black hair, though he had sworn by brown ever since he was a boy, isolated himself till the space he filled in the public eye was contemptibly small. Love is a possible strength in an actual weakness. Marriage transforms a distraction into a support, the power of which should be, and happily often is, in direct proportion to the degree of imbecility it supplants. Oak began now to see light in this direction, and said to himself, "I'll make her my wife, or upon my soul I shall be good for nothing!"

All this while he was perplexing himself about an errand on which he might consistently visit the cottage of Bathsheba's aunt.

He found his opportunity in the death of an ewe, mother of a living lamb. On a day which had a summer face and a winter constitution—a fine January morning, when there was just enough blue sky visible to make cheerfully disposed people wish for more, and an occasional sunshiny gleam of silvery whiteness, Oak put the lamb into a respectable Sunday basket, and stalked across the fields to the house of Mrs. Hurst, the aunt—George, the dog, walking behind, with a countenance of great concern at the serious turn pastoral affairs seemed to be taking.

Gabriel had watched the blue wood-smoke curling from the chimney with strange meditation. At evening he had fancifully traced it down the chimney to the spot of its origin—seen the hearth and Bathsheba beside it—beside it in her out-door dress; for the clothes she had worn on the hill were by association equally with her person included in the compass of his affection; they seemed at this early time of his love a necessary ingredient of the sweet mixture called Bathsheba Everdene.

He had made a toilet of a nicely adjusted kind—of a nature between the carefully neat and the carelessly ornate—of a degree between fine-market-day and wet-Sunday selection. He thoroughly cleaned his silver

watch-chain with whiting, put new lacing-straps to his boots, looked to the brass eyelet-holes, went to the inmost heart of the plantation for a new walking-stick, and trimmed it vigorously on his way back; took a new handkerchief from the bottom of his clothes-box, put on the light waistcoat patterned all over with sprigs of an elegant flower uniting the beauties of both rose and lily without the defects of either, and used all the hair-oil he possessed upon his usually dry, sandy and inextricably curly hair, till he had deepened it to a splendidly novel colour, between that of guano and Roman cement, making it stick to his head like mace round a nutmeg, or wet seaweed round a boulder after the ebb.

Nothing disturbed the stillness of the cottage save the chatter of a knot of sparrows on the eaves; one might fancy scandal and *tracasseries* to be no less the staple subject of these little coteries on roofs than of those under them. It seemed that the omen was an unpropitious one, for, as the rather untoward commencement of Oak's overtures, just as he arrived by the garden gate he saw a cat inside, going into various arched shapes and fiendish convulsions at the sight of his dog George. The dog took no notice, for he had arrived at an age at which all superfluous barking was cynically avoided as a waste of breath—in fact he never barked even at the sheep except to order, when it was done with an absolutely neutral countenance, as a liturgical form of Commination-service, which, though offensive, had to be gone through once now and then just to frighten the flock for their own good.

A voice came from behind some laurel-bushes into which the cat had run:

"Poor dear! Did a nasty brute of a dog want to kill it!—did he, poor dear!"

"I beg yer pardon," said Oak to the voice, "but George was walking on behind me with a temper as mild as milk."

Almost before he had ceased speaking, Oak was seized with a misgiving as to whose ear was the recipient of his answer. Nobody appeared, and he heard the person retreat among the bushes.

Gabriel meditated, and so deeply that he brought small furrows into his forehead by sheer force of reverie. Where the issue of an interview is as likely to be a vast change for the worse as for the better, any initial difference from expectation causes nipping sensations of failure. Oak went up to the door a little abashed: his mental rehearsal and the reality had had no common grounds of opening.

Bathsheba's aunt was indoors. "Will you tell Miss Everdene that somebody would be glad to speak to her?" said Mr. Oak. (Calling yourself merely Somebody, and not giving a name, is not by any means to be taken as an example of the ill-breeding of the rural world: it springs from a refined sense of modesty, of which townspeople, with their cards and announcements, have no notion whatever.)

Bathsheba was out. The voice had evidently been hers.

"Will you come in, Mr. Oak?"

"Oh, thank ye," said Gabriel, following her to the fireplace. "I've brought a lamb for Miss Everdene. I thought she might like one to rear: girls do."

"She might," said Mrs. Hurst, musingly; "though she's only a visitor here. If you will wait a minute, Bathsheba will be in."

"Yes, I will wait," said Gabriel, sitting down. "The lamb isn't really the business I came about, Mrs. Hurst. In short, I was going to ask her if she'd like to be married."

"And were you indeed?"

"Yes. Because if she would, I should be very glad to marry her. D'y'e know if she's got any other young man hanging about her at all?"

"Let me think," said Mrs. Hurst, poking the fire superfluously. . . .

"Yes—bless you, ever so many young men. You see, Farmer Oak, she's so good-looking, and an excellent scholar besides—she was going to be a governess once, you know, only she was too wild. Not that her young men ever come here—but, Lord, in the nature of women, she must have a dozen!"

"That's unfortunate," said Farmer Oak, contemplating a crack in the stone floor with sorrow. "I'm only an every-day sort of man, and my only chance was in being the first comer. . . . Well, there's no use in my waiting, for that was all I came about: so I'll take myself off home-along, Mrs. Hurst."

When Gabriel had gone about two hundred yards along the down, he heard a "hoi-hoi!" uttered behind him, in a piping note of more treble quality than that in which the exclamation usually embodies itself when shouted across a field. He looked round, and saw a girl racing after him, waving a white handkerchief.

Oak stood still—and the runner drew nearer. It was Bathsheba Everdene. Gabriel's colour deepened: hers was already deep, not, as it appeared, from emotion, but from running.

"Farmer Oak—I—" she said, pausing for want of breath, pulling up in front of him with a slanted face, and putting her hand to her side.

"I have just called to see you," said Gabriel, pending her further speech.

"Yes—I know that," she said, panting like a robin, her face red and moist from her exertions, like a peony petal before the sun dries off the dew. "I didn't know you had come (pant) to ask to have me, or I should have come in from the garden instantly. I ran after you to say (pant) that my aunt made a mistake in sending you away from courting me (pant)—"

Gabriel expanded. "I'm sorry to have made you run so fast, my dear," he said, with a grateful sense of favours to come. "Wait a bit till you've found your breath."

"—It was quite a mistake—aunt's telling you I had a young man already," Bathsheba went on. "I haven't a sweetheart at all (pant), and I never had one, and I thought that, as times go with women, it was *such* a pity to send you away thinking that I had several."

"Really and truly I am glad to hear that!" said Farmer Oak, smiling one of his long special smiles, and blushing with gladness. He held out his hand to take hers, which, when she had eased her side by pressing it there, was prettily extended upon her bosom to still her loud-beating heart. Directly he seized it she put it behind her, so that it slipped through his fingers like an eel.

"I have a nice snug little farm," said Gabriel, with half a degree less assurance than when he had seized her hand.

"Yes: you have."

"A man has advanced me money to begin with, but still, it will soon be paid off, and though I am only an every-day sort of man, I have got on a little since I was a boy." Gabriel uttered "a little" in a tone to show her that it was the complacent form of "a great deal." He continued: "When we are married, I am quite sure I can work twice as hard as I do now."

He went forward and stretched out his arm again. Bathsheba had overtaken him at a point beside which stood a low, stunted holly-bush, now laden with red berries. Seeing his advance take the form of an attitude threatening a possible enclosure, if not compression, of her person, she edged off round the bush.

"Why, Farmer Oak," she said, over the top, looking at him with rounded eyes, "I never said I was going to marry you."

"Well—that is a tale!" said Oak, with dismay. "To run after anybody like this, and then say you don't want me!"

"What I meant to tell you was only this," she said eagerly, and yet half conscious of the absurdity of the position she had made for herself: "that nobody has got me yet as a sweetheart, instead of my having a dozen, as my aunt said; I *hate* to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be to be had some day. Why, if I'd wanted you I shouldn't have run after you like this; 'twould have been the *forwardest* thing! But there was no harm in hurrying to correct a piece of false news that had been told you."

"Oh, no—no harm at all." But there is such a thing as being too generous in expressing a judgment impulsively, and Oak added with a more appreciative sense of all the circumstances—"Well, I am not quite certain it was no harm."

"Indeed, I hadn't time to think before starting whether I wanted to marry or not, for you'd have been gone over the hill."

"Come," said Gabriel, freshening again; "think a minute or two. I'll wait awhile, Miss Everdene. Will you marry me? Do, Bathsheba. I love you far more than common!"

"I'll try to think," she observed, rather more timorously; "if I can think out of doors; but my mind spreads away so."

"But you can give a guess."

"Then give me time." Bathsheba looked thoughtfully into the distance, away from the direction in which Gabriel stood.

"I can make you happy," said he to the back of her head, across the bush. "You shall have a piano in a year or two—farmers' wives are getting to have pianos now—and I'll practise up the flute right well to play with you in the evenings."

"Yes; I should like that."

"And have one of those little ten-pound gigs for market—and nice flowers, and birds—cocks and hens I mean, because they are useful," continued Gabriel, feeling balanced between prose and verse.

"I should like it very much."

"And a frame for cucumbers—like a gentleman and lady."

"Yes."

"And when the wedding was over, we'd have it put in the newspaper list of marriages."

"Dearly I should like that."

"And the babies in the births—every man jack of 'em! And at home by the fire, whenever you look up, there I shall be—and whenever I look up there will be you."

"Wait, wait, and don't be improper!"

Her countenance fell, and she was silent awhile. He contemplated the red berries between them over and over again, to such an extent, that holly seemed in his after-life to be a cypher signifying a proposal of marriage. Bathsheba decisively turned to him.

"No; 'tis no use," she said. "I don't want to marry you."

"Try."

"I have tried hard all the time I've been thinking; for a marriage would be very nice in one sense. People would talk about me, and think I had won my battle, and I should feel triumphant, and all that. But a husband—"

"Well!"

"Why, he'd always be there, as you say; whenever I looked up, there he'd be."

"Of course he would—I, that is."

"Well, what I mean is that I shouldn't mind being a bride at a wedding, if I could be one without having a husband. But since a woman can't show off in that way by herself, I shan't marry—at least yet."

"That's a terrible wooden story."

At this elegant criticism of her statement, Bathsheba made an addition to her dignity by a slight sweep away from him.

"Upon my heart and soul, I don't know what a maid can say stupider than that," said Oak. "But, dearest," he continued in a palliative voice, "don't be like it!" Oak sighed a deep honest sigh—none the less so in that, being like the sigh of a pine plantation, it was rather noticeable as a disturbance of the atmosphere. "Why won't you have me?" he said appealingly, creeping round the holly to reach her side.

"I cannot," she said retreating.

"But why?" he persisted, standing still at last in despair of ever reaching her, and facing over the bush.

"Because I don't love you."

"Yes, but——"

She contracted a yawn to an inoffensive smallness, so that it was hardly ill-mannered at all. "I don't love you," she said.

"But I love you—and, as for myself, I am content to be liked."

"Oh, Mr. Oak—that's very fine! You'd get to despise me."

"Never," said Mr. Oak, so earnestly that he seemed to be coming by the force of his words, straight through the bush and into her arms. "I shall do one thing in this life—one thing certain—that is, love you, and long for you, and *keep wanting you till I die.*" His voice had a genuine pathos now, and his large brown hands trembled a quarter of an inch each way.

"It seems dreadfully wrong not to have you when you feel so much," she said with a little distress, and looking hopelessly around for some means of escape from her moral dilemma. "How I wish I hadn't run after you!" However she seemed to have a short cut for getting back to cheerfulness, and set her face to signify archness. "It wouldn't do, Mr. Oak. I want somebody to tame me; I am too independent; and you would never be able to, I know."

Oak cast his eyes down the field in a way implying that it was useless to attempt argument.

"Mr. Oak," she said, with luminous distinctness and common sense; "you are better off than I. I have hardly a penny in the world—I am staying with my aunt for my bare sustenance. I am better educated than you—and I don't love you a bit: that's my side of the case. Now yours: you are a farmer just beginning, and you ought in common prudence, if you marry at all (which you should certainly not think of doing at present) to marry a woman with money, who would stock a larger farm for you than you have now."

Gabriel looked at her with a little surprise and much admiration.

"That's the very thing I had been thinking myself!" he naively said.

Farmer Oak had one-and-a-half Christian characteristics too many to succeed with Bathsheba: his humility, and a superfluous moiety of honesty. Bathsheba was decidedly disconcerted.

"Well, then, why did you come and disturb me?" she said, almost angrily, if not quite, an enlarging red spot rising in each cheek.

"I can't do what I think would be—would be——"

"Right?"

"No: wise."

"You have made an admission *now*, Mr. Oak," she exclaimed, with even more hauteur, and rocking her head disdainfully. "After that, do you think I could marry you? Not if I know it."

He broke in, passionately: "But don't mistake me like that. Because

I am open enough to own what every man in my position would have thought of, you make your colours come up your face, and get crabbed with me. That about your not being good enough for me is nonsense. You speak like a lady—all the parish notice it, and your uncle at Weatherbury is, I have heard, a large farmer—much larger than ever I shall be. May I call in the evening—or will you walk along with me on Sundays? I don't want you to make up your mind at once, if you'd rather not."

"No—no—I cannot. Don't press me any more—don't. I don't love you—so 'twould be ridiculous!" she said, with a laugh.

No man likes to see his emotions the sport of a merry-go-round of skittishness. "Very well," said Oak, firmly, with the bearing of one who was going to give his days and nights to Ecclesiastes for ever. "Then I'll ask you no more."

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTURE OF BATHSHEBA: A PASTORAL TRAGEDY.

THE news which one day reached Gabriel, that Bathsheba Everdene had left the neighbourhood, had an influence upon him which might have surprised any who never suspected that the more emphatic the renunciation the less absolute its character.

It may have been observed that there is no regular path for getting out of love as there is for getting in. Some people look upon marriage as a short cut that way, but it has been known to fail. Separation, which was the means that chance offered to Gabriel Oak by Bathsheba's disappearance, though effectual with people of certain humours, is apt to idealize the removed object with others—notably those whose affection, placid and regular as it may be, flows deep and long. Oak belonged to the even-tempered order of humanity, and felt the secret fusion of himself in Bathsheba to be burning with a finer flame now that she was gone—that was all.

His incipient friendship with her aunt had been nipped by the failure of his suit, and all that Oak learnt of Bathsheba's movements was done indirectly. It appeared that she had gone to a place called Weatherbury, more than twenty miles off, but in what capacity—whether as a visitor, or permanently, he could not discover.

Gabriel had two dogs. George, the elder, exhibited an ebony-tipped nose, surrounded by a narrow margin of pink flesh, and a coat marked in random splotches approximating in colour to white and slaty grey, but the grey, after years of sun and rain, had been scorched and washed out of the more prominent locks, leaving them of a reddish-brown, as if the blue component of the grey had faded, like the indigo from the same kind of colour in Turner's pictures. In substance, it had originally been hair,

but long contact with sheep, seemed to be turning it by degrees into wool of a poor quality and staple.

This dog had originally belonged to a shepherd of inferior morals and dreadful temper, and the result was that George knew the exact degree of condemnation signified by cursing and swearing of all descriptions better than the wickedest old man in the neighbourhood. Long experience had so precisely taught the animal the difference between such exclamations as "Come in!" and "D— ye, come in!" that he knew to a hair's breadth the rate of trotting back from the ewes' tails that each call involved, if a staggerer with the sheep-crook was to be escaped. Though old, he was clever and trustworthy still.

The young dog, George's son, might possibly have been the image of his mother, for there was not much resemblance between him and George. He was learning the sheep-keeping business, so as to follow on at the flock when the other should die, but had got no further than the rudiments as yet—still finding an insuperable difficulty in distinguishing between doing a thing well enough and doing it too well. So earnest and yet so wrong-headed was this young dog (he had no name in particular, and answered with perfect readiness to any pleasant interjection), that if sent behind the flock to help them on, he did it so thoroughly that he would have chased them across the whole county with the greatest pleasure if not called off, or reminded when to stop by the example of old George.

Thus much for the dogs. On the further side of Norcombe Hill was a chalk-pit, from which chalk had been drawn for generations, and spread over adjacent farms. Two hedges converged upon it in the form of a V, but without quite meeting. The narrow opening left, which was immediately over the brow of the pit, was protected by a rough railing.

One night, when Farmer Oak had returned to his house, believing there would be no further necessity for his attendance on the down, he called as usual to the dogs, previously to shutting them up in the outhouse till next morning. Only one responded—old George; the other could not be found, either in the house, lane, or garden. Gabriel then remembered that he had left the two dogs on the hill eating a dead lamb (a kind of meat he usually kept from them, except when other food ran short), and concluding that the young one had not finished his meal, he went indoors to the luxury of a bed, which latterly he had only enjoyed on Sundays.

It was a still, moist night. Just before dawn he was assisted in waking by the abnormal reverberation of familiar music. To the shepherd, the note of the sheep-bell, like the ticking of the clock to other people, is a chronic sound that only makes itself noticed by ceasing or altering in some unusual manner from the well-known idle tinkle which signifies to the accustomed ear, however distant, that all is well in the fold. In the solemn calm of the awakening morn that note was heard by Gabriel, beating with unusual violence and rapidity. This exceptional ringing may be caused in two ways—by the rapid feeding of the sheep,

bearing the bell, as when the flock breaks into new pasture, which gives it an intermittent rapidity, or by the sheep starting off in a run, when the sound has a regular palpitation. The experienced ear of Oak knew the sound he now heard to be caused by the running of the flock with great velocity.

He jumped out of bed, dressed, and tore down the lane through a foggy dawn, and ascended the hill. The forward ewes were kept apart from those among which the fall of lambs would be later, there being two hundred of the latter class in Gabriel's flock. These two hundred seemed to have absolutely vanished from the hill. There were the fifty with their lambs, enclosed at the other end as he had left them, but the rest, forming the bulk of the flock, were nowhere. Gabriel called at the top of his voice the shepherd's call.

"Ovey, ovey, ovey!"

"Not a single bleat. He went to the hedge—a gap had been broken through it, and in the gap were the footprints of the sheep. Rather surprised to find them break fence at this season, yet putting it down instantly to their great fondness for ivy in winter-time, of which a great deal grew in the plantation, he followed through the hedge. They were not in the plantation. He called again: the valleys and furthest hills resounded as when the sailors invoked the lost Hylas on the Mysian shore; but no sheep. He passed through the trees and along the ridge of the hill. On the extreme summit, where the ends of the two converging hedges of which we have spoken were stopped short by meeting the brow of the chalk-pit, he saw the younger dog standing against the sky—dark and motionless as Napoleon at St. Helena.

A horrible conviction darted through Oak. With a sensation of bodily faintness he advanced: at one point the rails were broken through, and there he saw the footprints of his ewes. The dog came up, licked his hand, and made signals implying that he expected some great reward for signal services rendered. Oak looked over the precipice. The ewes lay dead at its foot—a heap of two hundred mangled carcasses, representing in their condition just now at least two hundred more.

Oak was an intensely humane man: indeed, his humanity often tore in pieces any politic intentions of his bordering on strategy, and carried him on as by gravitation. A shadow in his life had always been that his flock ended in mutton—that a day came and found every shepherd an arrant traitor to his defenceless sheep. His first feeling now was one of pity for the untimely fate of these gentle ewes and their unborn lambs.

It was a second to remember another phase of the matter. The sheep were not insured. All the savings of a frugal life had been dispersed at a blow; his hopes of being an independent farmer were laid low—possibly for ever. Gabriel's energies, patience, and industry had been so severely taxed during the years of his life between eighteen and eight-and-twenty, to reach his present stage of progress, that no more seemed to be left in him. He leant down upon a rail, and covered his face with his hands.

Stupors, however, do not last for ever, and Farmer Oak recovered from his. It was as remarkable as it was characteristic that the one sentence he uttered was in thankfulness:—

“Thank God I am not married: what would *she* have done in the poverty now coming upon me!”

Oak raised his head, and wondering what he could do, listlessly surveyed the scene. By the outer margin of the pit was an oval pond, and over it hung the attenuated skeleton of a chrome-yellow moon, which had only a few days to last—the morning star dogging her on the right hand. The pool glittered like a dead man's eye, and as the world awoke a breeze blew, shaking and elongating the reflection of the moon without breaking it, and turning the image of the star to a phosphoric streak upon the water. All this Oak saw and remembered.

As far as could be learnt it appeared that the poor young dog, still under the impression that since he was kept for running after sheep, the more he ran after them the better, had at the end of his meal off the dead lamb, which may have given him additional energy and spirits, collected all the ewes into a corner, driven the timid creatures through the hedge, across the upper field, and by main force of worrying had given them momentum enough to break down a portion of the rotten railing, and so hurled them over the edge.

George's son had done his work so thoroughly that he was considered too good a workman to live, and was, in fact, taken and tragically shot at twelve o'clock that same day—another instance of the untoward fate which so often attends dogs and other philosophers who follow out a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and attempt perfectly consistent conduct in a world made up so largely of compromise.

Gabriel's farm had been stocked by a dealer—on the strength of Oak's promising look and character—who was receiving a per-centage from the farmer till such time as the advance should be cleared off. Oak found that the value of stock, plant, and implements which were really his own would be about sufficient to pay his debts, leaving himself a free man with the clothes he stood up in, and nothing more.

South Siberian Stories.

As two Tartar princes were riding afield one day, far away from home, they agreed that if a son should be born to the one, and a daughter to the other, the children should be mutually betrothed. Soon afterwards came tidings that to the one had been born a boy named Tajyr, and to the other a girl named Saura. The two princes set off at once for their homes, but Tajyr's father was thrown from his horse by the way and killed. A few years passed by and the two children became intimate associates, but they knew nothing about the betrothal compact. At last, one day, as they sat side by side at school, Tajyr pressed Saura's hand on their book. Saura told this to her mother, who cried, "O my child, thou hast a father, but Tajyr is an orphan; to him we will not give thee in marriage." And soon afterwards Saura was carried away by her father, who took up his abode in a distant city of which he became the ruler.

For some time Tajyr remained at home, but at length the story of his betrothal came to his ear; then he took leave of his mother and set out in search of his bride. After many adventures he came to a city in which lived a childless old woman, and she adopted him as her son. One day as he wandered about the streets there came to his ears the sound of children reading aloud in a school, and he went home and wept bitterly. His adopted mother marvelled thereat; he told her that he could not but weep when he heard the voices of schoolchildren, and he asked what manner of school this was. She told him that it was one in which forty maidens were taught, and that their teacher was the daughter of a stranger prince who had become the ruler of the city. Tajyr begged her to get leave for him to study in that school; so she went to the prince and besought him to allow her son to learn to read together with the forty maidens, and the prince granted her prayer. So Tajyr went to the school, and in the teacher he recognized his betrothed. Beginning at the bottom of the class he each day gained a place, and at the end of forty days he found himself by Saura's side. Then he made himself known to her, and she recognized in him her rightful lord. So she dismissed her forty pupils, saying that she would teach no more. When her father learnt what had taken place he was wroth, and he seized Tajyr, not knowing who he really was, shut him up in a great chest, and set it afloat on the sea. But Tajyr escaped, and after a time he made his way back to his bride. Again did her father seize him, and this time he gave orders that the audacious stranger should have his head struck off. So Tajyr was led away to the place of execution.

In vain did "many lords and viziers and Tartars," moved by Saura's prayers, entreat the prince to pardon her lover. But at last came Saura herself, her hair all dishevelled, her face all torn and bleeding, and so bitterly did she weep that at last the prince consented to spare Tajyr's life. Off set a messenger to bid the headsman stay his hand. But the respite came too late; Tajyr was already dead. Then Saura called to her the forty maidens with whom she had been at school, and with them she set out for the spot where Tajyr's body lay. But when they drew nigh, fear came upon the maidens. So Saura kissed them and let them go, but she herself went on. And when she had found the corpse she threw her arms around it, and between it and her own fair breast she set a sharp dagger in such a manner that when she straitened her embrace the dagger pierced her heart, and so she died.

They buried her and Tajyr apart; but even in death he would not be severed from her, and a few days later the bodies of the two lovers were found in the same grave. Then they buried them in two graves between which water flowed. Forty days later they who passed that way saw that a poplar had grown up at the head of each grave, and the two trees had bent towards each other and intertwined their boughs, forming a leafy arch above the stream. On these boughs stood storks, and amid the foliage nightingales sang. And there, amid the birds and the green leaves, might the gliding forms of Tajyr and Saura be seen.

Such is the outline of a story current among the Tobol Tartars—one of the numerous branches of the great Turkish family in Siberia. It is quoted here as the first of a few specimens of the popular tales of that family, not on account of any originality of theme, for it is, like most of the stories of its class, merely an echo of an alien tale; nor for any special dexterity of handling, for its details are full of confusion and obscurity; but because it contains more of human interest than is usually to be found in the wild legends of these uncultured peoples. Of the numerous stories contained in the bulky volumes which the erudite industry of Dr. Radloff, one of the Professors in the University of Kazan, is devoting to the "Folk-literature of the Turkish races of South Siberia,"* the greater part describe the adventures of heroes who, being clearly mythological, have but little in common with the ordinary weaknesses of humanity. By way of illustration of this statement we will give a very condensed version of the metrical romance of Altyn Pyrkan, a poem of more than usual obscurity, and no less than 1,630 lines long. Another of the poems, it may be observed, runs to the length of 3,825 lines.

Until his sixtieth year had passed away the rich Kara Kan was child-

* "Proben der Volksliteratur der türkischen Stämme Süd-Sibiriens, gesammelt und übersetzt von Dr. W. Radloff," St. Petersburg 1866-72—a work of which it is impossible to speak too highly. Four volumes have, as yet, appeared. The tale of Tajyr and Saura occurs at vol. iv. p. 340. Dr. Radloff's spelling of proper names has been followed throughout, except in the case of some modified vowels, in which the diacritical points have been discarded as needless encumbrances, Saura being substituted for Säürä, &c.

less; then a babe was born to him. But at that very time he was attacked by an irresistible foe, Altyn Argak by name, who, in obedience to the commands of his father, Saryg Kan, carried off into captivity Kara Kan and all that belonged to him. Only in one thing did Altyn Argak disobey his father, in that he did not slay Kara Kan's new-born babe. Now when Altyn Argak drew nigh to his father's abode, he ordered a hut to be built of reeds, and in it he left Kara Kan with his wife and infant child, while he himself rode on to report to his father what he had done. But when Saryg Kan learnt what had taken place he waxed wroth with his son because he had not slain Kara Kan's child, and he cried aloud, "Ho ye who dwell beneath the earth, Ye Seven Naked Men, come forth!" Then the whole earth trembled, and the Seven Naked Men appeared and listened to the commands of Saryg Kan. And they seized Altyn Argak and bore him away to a mountain peak. There they bound him and his horse by nine chains to a mighty pyre, formed of all the wood which the mountain forests could supply; and, having set the pile alight, they watched it while it burnt. Nine years long did it burn before it was all consumed. Then a wind arose and scattered the ashes far and wide. Where the fire had blazed sprang up a rich crop of grass, and the spot on which Altyn Argak perished could by no eye be recognized, "neither by the god who dwells on high nor by the demon who dwells below."

As Saryg Kan rode towards the reed-hut in which Kara Kan dwelt with his family, he became aware of a wondrous Foal. Golden was its mane, and golden were its fore hoofs; its hind hoofs and its tail were of silver. He strove to catch it, but it ran to the reed-hut, caught up into one of its nostrils Kara Kan's babe, and disappeared. Saryg Kan sent after it his "two black hounds;" and "the two king-eagles which dwell in the sky;" then he summoned "the Seven-headed Tschalbägän, with the iron mace, who dwells below the earth;" the fish-god, Kär Palyk, "who lives at the bottom of the sea;" and the terrible "Swan-wife with the fallow mare," and ordered them to seek the Foal within the earth, and below the earth, and in all the waters of the earth. Having done this, he tried to find, by means of a golden mirror, which way he ought to ride. But neither by gazing at the sun and moon in it, nor by counting "the stars of heaven," and "all the water-drops," and "the roots of the herbs," could he make out in which direction the Foal had fled. So he rode blindly on. Meantime Kara Kan and his wife had died. "Of hunger and of thirst perished both the aged ones."

Long did Saryg Kan ride on. At length one day, on the summit of a bare "iron peak," over which no bird could fly, up which no beast could climb, he found the Foal resting, and beside it, on a broad stone, the Babe. Bending his bow with such force that his face, from being "whiter than snow," and "redder than blood," turned "all black," he let fly an arrow at the Foal. "Upon this earth was there no people which did not hear the whirring of the bowstring;" but the arrow flew idly by, and the Foal disappeared. A second time did Saryg Kan climb a hill, and

from it he again caught sight of the Foal, held at bay by his two black hounds on the shore of the "white sea." Again did he shoot; but his arrow killed only his hounds, and the rescued Foal dashed into the water. There Kär Palyk tried to swallow it; but it turned into a fish, which disturbed the stones at the bottom of the water, so that the baffled monster got his mouth full of them, and then it emerged at the other side. There it dropped the child in a grassy spot, assumed the form of a hunter, pierced forty elks with a single shaft, and fed the child daintily upon the marrow from their bones. Then, as a Foal, once more it caught up the child and recommenced its wild career.

At length the fugitives reached a spot where gleamed a golden castle, and near it rose nine hills over which forty maidens were roaming at play. In the hands of the forty maidens were forty kerchiefs of gold. "Forty songs did the maidens sing as they played." The Foal made a grassy couch on which it laid the Babe, covered it over with a canopy of leaves, and then—turned itself into forty maidens, each holding in her hand a silver cloth. The two bands of maidens united and sported together. "That months went by they heeded not; the fourscore maidens played. That years passed by they heeded not; without a pause they played." At length the Foal remembered the Babe, and went in search of it. But in vain; the Babe had disappeared, leaving no trace behind except its rustling canopy of faded leaves. Then the Foal changed into a Maral, and began furiously tearing up the ground with its golden horns. After a time "on this earth shone no more the sun; the day and the night were both alike. By the dust was the moon darkened; the moon no longer shone upon the earth." The world seemed to be coming to an end, when suddenly the stolen Babe, now a blooming boy, was restored, the Foal resumed its former shape, and for a while all went well.

But, before long, the boy, while wrestling with a playmate, fell and broke his neck. On earth there was none to aid him; so the Foal flew aloft into the sky, soared above the abode of "The Nine Creators," above the higher region of another mystic being, and at length reached the residence of "The Maidens Three" who can give life to the dead. "On the golden bed sat the Three Maidens; on their golden table was spread the best of fare." And they listened favourably to the Foal's appeal, bidding it watch by the dead boy's side, to see that neither worm nor fly attacked the corpse before their aid arrived. So the Foal returned to earth, and there fanned the dead body with its head, while "into blood turned the tears from its eyes; into ice turned the dew from its nostrils." At length came, in the shape of a cuckoo, the youngest of the three sisters. She sprinkled the corpse with the water of life; she laid in its mouth "the nine-fold yellow herb." Then the dead arose, and mounted what was no longer a Foal, but a full-grown coal-black steed, all gleaming with equipments of gold. "When he struck his sable steed with the whip, the lightning blazed in the sky. When he swang the whip the sky darkened, the black earth rocked." And the lad cried, "O sable steed, that wast my

father, O sable steed that wast my mother, give me a name! Every stag has hair, every man has a name. Give me my name!" Then the steed named him Altyn Pyrkan, bade him be of good courage, and bore him on and on till he reached the land of Saryg Kan.

Altyn Pyrkan rode up to, and entered, the golden castle of Saryg Kan, whom he found sitting on his golden bed, combing his beard, and whom he at once attacked. In vain did Saryg Kan invoke the aid of "the Seven-headed Tschälbügän." The youthful hero seized the Seven-headed demon by the feet, and flung him down "below nine earth-surfaces." There lay he senseless. Just as ill fared "the Swan-wife with the fallow mare." Her the youth struck on the cheek. "No people is there on this earth which heard not the sound of his hand." Down below nine earth-surfaces fell the Swan-wife and her steed. "Very nearly did she give up the ghost. All thought of this world did she forego." Still worse was the fate of "The Seven Naked Men." Them did the hero nail, pierced by the same arrow, to a white peak. Afterwards he cleft in half the two black hounds, and tore in twain the two king-eagles, and then he seized Saryg Kan by the feet, and dashed him to pieces against the bridle-post. "For the magpies to pick remained his flesh. For the ravens to hack remained his flesh. For the dogs to lap remained his blood. Into earth and sand mouldered away his bones."

Then the youth rode away to seek the remains of Altyn Argak, the hero who had been burnt to death for sparing his life. Having found the spot where the fire had blazed, and from which a wind from the left had carried away the victim's ashes, he summoned a wind from the right which brought them back again. "All these ashes did he collect, thrice did he stamp upon the ground, thrice did he whistle." The dead Altyn Argak became himself again, and then he and the youthful hero who had brought him back to life agreed to live together as brothers. Time passed by and the friends determined to get married. The younger asked the hand of a maiden for the elder; but her two brothers replied, "We will not give her. Binding a stone to her neck will we rather fling her into the sea;" and they added to insult the injury of blows. Then Altyn Pyrkan seized one of the brothers, gripped him tightly under his left arm, and punished him with the right till he died. Afterwards "to the white water he brought him, plucked out his heart, washed it in the white water and so drove out of it its evil nature, and then restored him to life." By a similar operation the other hero was in a like manner benefited, and then the penitent brothers agreed to their sister's marriage with Altyn Argak. Altyn Pyrkan next went in search of a bride for himself. Flying right up into the sky, he first visited the Nine Creators, who received him hospitably, and then he addressed himself to the deity who dwells above them, Ödurbä Tschajan, who thanked him warmly for what he had done to the two brothers. "Them did I create," he said. "They are great and mighty heroes, but their souls were evil. Their souls hast thou washed, a white soul hast thou given to

them ; therefore be thou thanked ! " After leaving him, Altyn Pyrkan soared to the still loftier abode of " The Three Maidens," the youngest of whom he asked to be his wife. " Without having fought with a hero will I not marry him. Let us fight at once," she replied. The combat began and lasted long. " How many months passed by they knew not. How many years passed by did not they themselves know." They trampled down the whole earth, so that it could no longer have supported them, had not " all the Creators " come and strengthened it. Not a hill was left standing ; not a tree remained upright. At last, after the hero's armour had given way at nine points, he made a final effort, and lifted the maiden high aloft in the air. " But down on the ground he did not dash the maiden ; he took pity on his wife that was to be. On the palm of his hand he placed her ; in his golden pocket did he stow her away." Then to his own home did he bear her in triumph as his bride. And with so much spirit were the sports at his marriage feast carried on that " the best of the horses died there ; there died the best of the men. The bones of the heroes formed a twin-peaked cairn ; the blood of the heroes flowed like a sea," and " the dogs which fed on their flesh beside the door could no longer stand on their feet ; the magpies which had fed on their flesh beside the smoke-hole in the roof could no longer fly—could only hop along the steppe." *

We are not now engaged upon the solution of mythological problems, otherwise many remarks of more or less value might be made upon this somewhat incoherent tale—one which is the more remarkable inasmuch as in it a being of apparently solar attributes, and certainly connected with ideas of yellowness and light, is annihilated by the son of the Black (*Kara*) Lord of the Sable Steed. But instead of investigating the hidden meaning of these new " Tartar Tales," we will refer to a few more of them, with a view towards conveying a general idea of their characteristic features, and of the picture of nomad life which they bring before the eyes of their hearers. The prose tales are not always true to that life, often dealing with towered cities and the busy haunts of men in a style which betrays their borrowed nature ; but the poems, even when the themes are foreign, always teem with allusions to the homes of their reciters in the boundless steppe, their life in the saddle and the *yourt*.

One of the peculiarities of these stories is their mention (due perhaps to Chinese influences) of a singularly protracted kind of crucifixion. The introduction to the poem about Aran Taidshy,† for instance, tells how the childless old K k Kan said to himself one day, " Beyond thirty heavens lives my friend, the hero, Altyn M k . Him will I slay ; his wife will I take unto myself." So he set out with that friendly purpose. During his absence a son was born to him, but soon afterwards the demon prince Tschylan Kan came from his abode " beneath seven earth-surfaces," carried off the boy to his subterranean

* Radloff, ii. 89-138. Current among the Sagai Tartars on the Upper Abakan.

† Radloff, i. 415-423.

home, and there "nailed him with iron nails to the top of an iron larch-tree." Such were the tidings told to Kōk Kan by his friend Altyn Mōkō, who then, "descending under the earth," sought the land of the demon prince. There he found Kōk Kan's stolen cattle, and there, on the top of the larch-tree, was Kōk Kan's child, still living, though he had now been nailed to it for seven years. Altyn Mōkō shot at the larch-tree an arrow which he had borrowed from Kōk Kan, and immediately the demon appeared, seized upon the intruder, and treated him with such violence that "the blood from his breast was as a sea; the blood from his mouth was as a sea. The at morn fighting Altyn Mōkō was at eventide all but destroyed." But at that moment the boy came running down from the larch-tree to which he had been nailed, exclaiming, "Kill not my friend Altyn Mōkō before I arrive," and a terrible combat took place between him and the demon. Many a year did it continue; but at last the youthful warrior, now grown to man's estate, flung the demon so high into the air that he died.

The poem of Puga-Dakā * relates how an orphan of that name, when six years old, asked his nine-year-old sister to tell him about their father. At first she refused; but at length she told him that he had been a mighty hero, but "when he reached his ninetieth year he became a feeble grey-beard." Then came two hero-brothers, carried him off to their home, and there, "with nine iron nails did they fasten him to a pillar." When the boy heard this, he at once set off to rescue his father, and after a time he reached the abode of the two heroes, and tied up his steed to an iron larch-tree which stood beside their door. There, as he looked around him, he saw "a column of rock, ascending to the sky. To it his father, still alive, was fastened by nine iron nails;" and he heard his father cry, "If hither came my only son, much should I have to tell to him. If to the two brothers came my only son, after he had grown to man's estate, no more should I with nine nails be fastened to this rock. My ninety-year-old body, fastened though it be with nine nails, will not die."

In the similar story of Tarba Kindshi,† also told in verse, an athletic boy playfully flips off the heads of three of his companions. Thereat his father is so angry that he shuts him up in a cask, which he then sends to sea. It floats and floats, until at last it reaches the subterranean abode of Erlik Kan, who opens it, sees the boy, and joyfully exclaims, "White flesh have I found for my eating!" However, he surrenders the prize to one of his heroes, who carries the boy away with him, till his horse complains of the double burden, and then he leaves him to his fate. Long time does the boy wander in the underground land where no sun is. "The red flesh from the soles of his feet remains hanging to the stones. The thick flesh of his legs remains lying by the way." Weeping and wailing does he wander, till he comes to "the Smoke-hole of the Earth," the aperture which leads up into the light of day. Through it he is borne by a friendly steed, from off which he falls overpowered "when he sees the

* Radloff, ii. 20-43.

† Ibid. 254-277.

radiance of the sun." Hard by is "a golden sea," in which he bathes, and then he fumigates himself with burnt thyme, whereupon "the demon-reck leaves him, the day-reck enters into him." After this he obtains a heroic steed and knightly armour, and rides away to his former home, which he finds ruined and desolate. On he rides, and at length comes to a hill, whence looking down he sees two fires burning in the distance. "When the youth reaches the spot where the two fires are burning, and looks around—there is his father nailed to an iron larch-tree. His father is still alive. The two spots where fire was burning are his father's two eyes."

By other exaggerations of a similar kind are these stories distinguished. Their heroes are remarkably tenacious of life, and expose themselves with impunity to such injuries as the tamer romance of Europe would hesitate to attest. Thus in the partly metrical tale of Ak Köbö, * we find the following picture of a single combat in which that hero engages with Ködön Kan. "Ködön Kan ran him through and through with his lance. Thereupon Ak Köbö cried—

'Well dost thou know how to pierce,
But to lift on high knowest thou not,'

Then Ködön Kan heaved on high the lance, with Ak Köbö on it, and held him above himself. From the lance's point on high, cried Ak Köbö—

'Well dost thou know how to lift on high,
But to shake knowest thou not.'

When Ködön Kan had shaken the lance, down its shaft glided Ak Köbö. And when he had come to the bottom he drew his sword, and struck Ködön Kan's head off. Said Ködön Kan, 'My cap has tumbled off.' Then Ak Köbö drew the lance out of his body, and threw it aside, after which he mounted his horse and rode home. But Ködön Kan's people took a stick, and fitted it into the bone of his neck. On this stick they stuck Ködön Kan's chopped-off head. Ködön Kan remained alive, and returned home to his own people."

An even stranger fight than this occurs in the remarkable history of Altyn Mergan.† That hero's wife having been carried off during his absence by a "Swan-wife," he sets out in search of her. In the course of his wanderings he is obliged to fight an "Earth-Hero." "With his forty-fathom-long lance pierced he the Hero. Then he raised the lance-point aloft, his dappled steed the while standing still, deep in the black earth. Aloft on the point of the steel lance writhed the Hero, the Mighty One, the Earth-Hero. Seven days long remained he there. The forty-fathom-long lance became red-hot." This way and that did it bend. Only after seven days did the transfixed Hero give up the ghost. In a second combat with a similar foe whom Altyn Mergan pierces and holds aloft seven days, his lance becomes red-hot, and bends double; the Earth-Hero falls off it

* Radloff, iv. 56-80.

† Ibid. ii. 278-307; a poem 1,002 lines long.

to the ground, and renews the fight, which Altyn Mergan has great difficulty in bringing to a favourable conclusion. As the Swan-wife is one of the most remarkable of the many mythological personages which figure in these tales, it may be added that Altyn Mergan pursues her underground. Coming to a "seven-angled house," the Swan-wife and her horse bound through one of its windows. The Hero immediately dismounts and jumps through the window after her. Inside he finds the owner of the house, who not unnaturally remarks, "People enter a house by the door. By the window do people not enter in." Altyn Mergan accounts for his intrusion, and explains who he is; upon which the stranger, in a fashion not altogether unknown to our own drama, at once claims him as his long-lost brother. Altyn Mergan asks his newly-found relative what he has done with the Swan-wife and her fallow mare. Whereupon the elder brother unrips one side of his bosom, and thence takes out the fallow mare; unrips the other side of his bosom, and thence takes out the Swan-wife. Afterwards he tears in two first the mare and then the Swan-wife, and flings the severed fragments out of the window.

In all genuine folk-tales there is but one step between the actual and the impossible, but in these romances the transition is remarkably abrupt. The story generally commences with a realistic description of steppe life. The head of a yourt arises one day, saddles his trusty steed, and sets off to inspect his wealth of horses and horned cattle. After a time he returns, ties up his horse to the post beside the door, and enters his tent. There his wife has his meal ready for him; he eats and drinks and sleeps. A simple life, chiefly of a healthy and breezy character, so far as the men are concerned. But suddenly, without any warning, it alters its nature. The steppe is no longer a commonplace plain, capable of but slight variety; it is the thin partition between two warring worlds, peopled by hostile inhabitants of supernatural powers. Above stretches the abode of "The Nine Creators," overarched by that of Ödörbä Tschajan, also a Creator but not a restorer to life; and higher still is the sphere of the Three Maidens, Turanian Fates or Nornes, who have power over life and death. Looked at from below, the steppe is seen to be a mere crust spread above infinite abysses, which form the realm of the gloomy Erlik Kan (said to be the Erl King of Western story), the abode of the demon race of Ainas, of the terrible Swan-wife (a being very different from the Aryan "Swan-maiden"), of the Seven-headed Tschälbägan (Turanian Dragon, Giant or Ogre), of "The Naked Men," and of many other equally objectionable demons. And at a word, at a touch, the steppe yawns asunder; into the common light of day emerge the dwellers in darkness; a fray commences in which the creative beings on high take part against the agents of destruction below; and a man, who has been till then an insignificant roamer in the desert, suddenly becomes the link between heaven and hell, the pivot on which the whole universe turns.

We have made some acquaintance with the mythological side of these

stories.* It may be well, by way of a change, to turn to some of their descriptions of real life. Here and there, especially in the poems, little touches of nature occur, which come home to us more readily than mythological extravagances. Thus, when a hero's faithful steed falls dead: "Beside the head of his black horse did he seat himself; bitterly did he weep and lament. 'O thou black steed, that wast to me a father, O thou black steed, that wast to me a mother, wherefore hast thou died? How can I bring thee back to life?'" In all these stories, it may be observed, a man is known, not only by his own name, but also by the colour of his horse. "Who art thou?" asks one hero meeting another, and employing a settled form of words. "Every stag has hair, every man has a name; tell me thy name." To which the stranger replies, "I am so-and-so with the black steed," or otherwise, as the case may be. Name-giving, by the way, is a serious matter, as may be remarked in the story of Ai Tolysy, at whose naming a chief summons all his people, and proclaims, "He who gives a good name, on him will I confer a brave steed and fine raiment; but he who gives a bad name, his neck will I lay upon the block and cut in twain with the sword." To which the people not unnaturally reply, "We won't give any name at all;" and the chief has at last to cry, "Let him be Ai Tolysy with the sable steed!"

Women do not usually occupy a very exalted position in these tales; but the relations between mothers and their children, sisters and their brothers, are set in a pleasant light. The kindly watchfulness manifested by the elder sister of many of the stories in behalf of an orphan brother is doubtless true to real life, while the rare accounts of unsisterly behaviour are probably to be accepted only in a mythological sense. Of such a nature is the Tartar version in the third volume (p. 321) of a well-known Indian myth, in which a sister conspires with a rival hero against her brother's life, sending him on all sorts of dangerous enterprises, strewing peas under his feet when he wrestles, and eventually supplying the very strangely tempered steel with which he is put to temporary death. His revenge, it may be remarked, is of a particularly ferocious nature. The variants of the story in different lands devote the criminal to various kinds of chastisement, such as being dragged behind or torn between wild horses; or being burnt, beheaded, or otherwise corrected; but the Kirghiz brother behaves to his treacherous sister as follows:

"Then Erkam Aidar seized his sister and bound her on his horse. And after he got home he used to cut a piece of flesh off his sister every

* For a fuller account of their cosmogonical and mythological systems—which appear to be a strange medley of heterogeneous elements, Zoroastrian, Buddhistic, Mohammedan, and even Christian, due to Persian, Mongolian, Turkish, Ugrian, and, to some extent, Russian influences—see the Introduction to Schiefner's *Heldensagen der minussinschen Tataren*, pp. xvii.—xxi. For their ethnology see Castrén's *Ethnologische Vorlesungen über die altaischen Völker*, at the end of which are several *Tatarische Heldensagen*.

day and eat it. After this fashion he treated her for three years. At the end of three years her flesh came to an end and she died."

Some allowance, in such cases as this, must doubtless be made for exaggeration. The Altaic story-tellers are fond of hyperbolical expressions. In one of the poems, for instance, a watchman asks his employer for a meal, observing, with some force, "For a hundred and sixty years have I tasted no food." In a prose story, the hero has been wandering long in the desert. At length, "He came to the fallow steppe, where the magpie flies not; he came to the yellow steppe, where no bird flies. There he thought he heard a crane cry. But it was not the voice of the crane he heard; it was his two shoulder blades that rattled together, so terribly thin had he become."

Courtship, in the poems, is generally carried on in a practical and expeditious manner. Thus the hero Kara Tygan Kan, riding from the Altai mountains, sends a messenger to demand the hand of Ak Kan's daughter. The maiden's father "sits silently there;" does not say, "I will give;" does not say, "I will not give;" but her two brothers reply, "Until our round heads fall, until our berry-like eyes grow dry, will we give her not." Therefore the suitor comes in person, challenges the two brothers, and discharges an arrow at them. The twang of his bow causes a cloud to fall, and for a time the result of his shot cannot be ascertained; but when the air clears, he sees that his arrow has carried off the two brothers. "Of the two brave heroes was nothing left but their right thumbs." After this, of course, his offer is accepted. As for the bride in such cases, she is not allowed much liberty of choice. In one poem, however, she expresses her sentiments to her father with much frankness. He has introduced a suitor to her, saying, "I am going to give thee to this man; wilt thou take him, my child?" "No, I will not take him," she replies. Her father loses his temper, and cries, pointing to what seems to be a bear in the corner of the room, "Perhaps thou wilt rather take the bear that sits there?" To which she replies, "Be he a bear, yet will I take him. Be he a tree-stump, yet will I take him. But the man thou hast brought will I not take." So the angry parent, exclaiming, "As thou wilt not go where I wish, so take thy bear!" flings her into the bear's arms. The supposed bear, it may be observed, is no wild beast, but "a black-headed man," who had, one day, swung a bear out of its skin, eaten its flesh, and donned its hide. This fact he does not mention to his wife's father; but he propitiates him by a present of cooked beef, "sweeter than honey and sugar," so that the mollified parent is forced to exclaim, "Though he be a bear, yet is he an excellent son-in-law."

There are not many descriptions of female beauty in these stories, in which, indeed, love plays a very secondary part. One of the most poetical is that which is given of the beautiful Aju Bika, whose face has never been exposed to the weather, who has never entered any but her father's house, who has never indulged in a horse laugh. She has hair as black as a crow; she bends herself like a pheasant. "Through her throat can

the food she swallows be seen. When she looks towards the sun, the sunbeams are reflected from her face." After marriage the husband seems to think less of his wife's appearance than of her culinary powers; and he is apt to treat her roughly, emphasising his orders with thumps. Sometimes she herself indulges in similar marks of affection. Thus we read that once, when the heroic Sadai Kan returned home, and told his wife that a guest was coming at the end of three days, "up from the golden bed sprang the excellent wife Sandjy Ko, seized the iron stove-rake, and hit him over the head with it." Then "the blood flowed down from the head of the born hero Sadai Kan; quietly did he lie down on the golden bed, and go to sleep," comforting himself, perhaps, with the proverb frequently quoted by his brother heroes (and so popular at the present day in Russia)—

A woman's hair is very long,
But very short are a woman's wits.

Some of the stories, however, offer a direct contradiction to this adage, such as the following curious variant of a familiar tale.* A Prince who understood the language of birds, heard two geese talking to each other one day as they flew. Then he turned to his Vizier, who was not so well acquainted with foreign tongues, asked him what the geese had said, and threatened to cut off his head if he could not give him a correct answer within three days. The Vizier went home, put his winding-sheet in his pocket, and went out for a melancholy walk. The Prince's daughter seeing him a prey to dejection, sent for him, and under the seal of secrecy communicated to him what the geese had been talking about. The one which flew in front, she said, was a gander, and the other was its mate. And the gander cried, "Every other year have we flown away after the other birds; why do we this year fly before them?" To which his mate replied, "Every other year have we remained longer than the other birds, because thou wast lame. I have fed and taken care of thee. A good wife can cure a bad husband." The Vizier went away, and repeated all this to the Prince, who forced him by renewed threats of death to give up the name of his instructress. Thereupon the Prince summoned all his vassals, killed a number of mares, and held a feast, proclaiming, "My daughter will I give to the most miserable man among you. We'll see if she can turn a bad husband into a good one." And he kept his word, giving her to "a Scaldhead," whose appearance, as described in an uncitable passage, was decidedly against him, but who, after his marriage, had the good sense to obey his wife in all things. She cooked the dinner, laid the cloth, and fulfilled all other menial duties herself, and by sewing and lacemaking she gained a round sum every day, so that the young couple were enabled to live comfortably, and "four candles burnt upon their table." After a time the Scaldhead was enabled, by his wife's contrivance, to obtain the right of demanding a favour from the Prince. And the favour which, at her suggestion, he asked was, that for

*-Radloff, iii. 347-355.

three days and three nights no fire might be lighted in any house but his. So proclamation was made, "that whosoever, with the exception of the Scaldhead, shall light a fire during the next three days and nights, shall have his head cut off." Accordingly, all fires were extinguished, except that which burnt incessantly upon the hearth of the wise Princess. And the consequence was, that "thither came Kydyr, and Fortune, and Prosperity, and gathered themselves together around the fire. When the youth arose in the morning, and looked about, every place was full of cattle; he himself was exceeding rich—was a Lord." Then his wife sent him—no longer a wretched being—to the chase, bidding him invite the Prince to return with him to dinner. And the Prince came, and when he had tasted one of the dishes, he cried aloud, "Oh! that is indeed a savoury dish; such dishes did my daughter cook—she who has gone away from me." Then his daughter revealed herself, and pointing to her now thoroughly respectable husband and her well-appointed home, she said, "The bad one have I made good. A good wife can cure a bad husband; thou canst see it with thy own eyes." Then the Prince burst into tears, and cried, "Oh, my daughter! thou hast been wise, and I a fool; come home with me, and rule my land. And having gone home, he died, and his son-in-law reigned in his stead."

This story has led us far away from the steppes. We are no longer among rough, uncultured Turks or Mongols, but are holding converse with men of Indian, or Persian, or Arabian refinement. But even the most manifestly foreign of these Siberian folk-tales have a certain native charm of their own, derived to a great extent from the simple manner in which they are related. We may take, for instance, the following Buddhistic-Mohammedan moral tale,* told among the Tobol Tartars of the Irtyesch district.

Harun al Raschid had remained childless to a good old age, but at last a son was born to him. So dear was the child to him, and so fearful was he of losing it, that he brought it up in an underground dwelling, far from the sight of ordinary men. Only to a few prudent servants and wise teachers was the secret of the young Prince's existence made known.

The child became a good boy, and spent twelve years contentedly in his retreat; but at the end of that time the daylight happened one day to stream in, and he naturally inquired of his mother what it was. She replied that it was the light of the unreal world above which had made its way into his real and actual world. Thereupon he entreated so earnestly to be allowed to visit that false world of which she spoke, that at last he was allowed to leave his cavern and emerge into the common light of day. Great was his astonishment at what he saw, and eagerly did he gaze around him as he walked through street after street, unable to satiate his curiosity. As he wandered along, followed by a vast crowd, there came up a poor man whose brother lay dead, and who begged that some of the Prince's followers would come to the funeral. Now the Prince had never

* Radloff, iv. 411-422.

seen a dead body; so he hastened away to where the corpse lay, stood by while it was washed and properly arrayed, and then followed it to the grave. While he looked on, "there came into his head all manner of thoughts." And he said to himself, "Alas! such is this world! To gain much wealth, to gather together many herds of cattle—this is mere folly; all that a man needs in this world is three pieces of linen for his winding-sheet, and four boards to lay over him." Wherefore should he trouble himself with vanities, he thought, and abide in a city which, at his father's death, he would be called upon to rule, thereby becoming exposed to all sorts of temptations? Better would it be for him to quit a scene as dangerous as false. So he withdrew himself from the sight of the people, and stole away towards the end of the city, and from the end of the city he fled into the steppe.

His father's efforts to find him having proved fruitless, he wandered on undisturbed. Before long, he met a beggar in a tattered garment, who humbly made way for the richly-apparelled stranger. But the Prince called to him to draw near and exchange dresses with him. This was soon done, and "the poor beggar rejoiced mightily over the fine clothes he had put on." But the Prince, when he had donned the poor man's garment, spoke thus: "To God be praise and thanks! Now have I at last attained unto wisdom!" Then he went his way, and after some time he came to a city where it was the custom for the poor to stand in the market-place, and wait till rich men who wanted servants came and took them into their employ. There he entered into the service of a wealthy old citizen, to whom he gave the fullest satisfaction. After a time the Prince went away, saying that his employer, if he needed him, might seek for him at the end of three days.

Hard by that city stood an old mosque, and thither the Prince hastened. And when he had reached it he entered in, twice prostrated himself, and thus prayed to God: "O Thou Almighty One! out of nought hast thou this nought created, hast set me in this vain world of ours. Do Thou now send me sickness. And after Thou hast sent me sickness, give unto me the hour of death. Were I to lead a long life in this vain world, I should heap up sins upon sins." Long time "did he weep bitterly and pray unto the Lord God; and the Lord God heard his prayer, and sent sickness upon him." Two days long did he lie there suffering. On the third day his employer was sitting down to eat, when he suddenly remembered the words of his servant. Then he rose from the untouched meal, and went forth to seek him, and after a long search he found him lying on the floor of the mosque, unable to move. Then the rich man would have taken him home and nursed him; but the Prince said, "O my father, take me not to thy house. This mosque, wherein prayers are said five times a day, is the house of God. Here will I lie, here will I give up the ghost when my death-hour comes." And he drew forth a small piece of money, and asked his employer to buy him a winding-sheet with it. The rich man would fain have bestowed on him fine linen for that

purpose; but the Prince would have none but the coarsest, bought with his own coin. Then he said to the rich man, "My father, the hour of my death is at hand. Now will I breathe my last wishes. When I am gone, do not lament over me, but fasten a cord round my neck, and drag me three times round about the mosque." Then he disclosed the name of his royal father, bequeathed him his ring and his Koran, and, having thus settled all his worldly affairs, he died.

When the rich man saw that the youth was dead, he tied a cord round the neck of the corpse, and was on the point of beginning to drag it about the mosque, when a voice called to him from on high, saying, "Thou fool! shall a friend of God be thus treated?" And at that moment the door of the mosque opened, and three men entered, bearing a golden basin and water in a flagon of gold. They washed the dead body, and then they wrapped it up and carried it away to where a grave awaited it in the midst of a great plain. "Forth from the grave came odours of Paradise and spread themselves around. Then the body was laid in the grave, and all the funeral rites were performed as the law prescribes. Two men read the Koran, and, when the blessing was uttered, the Old Man said 'Amen.'"

It is almost a pity to spoil the effect of this sternly simple tale, which a few verbal alterations would convert into a Christian legend, by quoting the paragraph which follows, and which brings into striking relief the sensuous charm with which Mohammedanism has endowed the ascetic frame of the original Buddhist parable. But thus does the story continue:—

"When the Old Man looked round after the blessing had been spoken, none of those who had stood by were any longer to be seen. Dshäbräil (Gabriel), landed be his name! brought from Paradise a golden throne, and placed it on the grave. Then the youth came forth from the grave and seated himself upon the golden throne. Thither came four houris, bringing raiment with them, and bearing food from Paradise on platters of gold. Around the youth did they stand, offering him their gifts."

It is true that the story states that, when the Old Man, after conveying to Haroun Alraschid the bequest of his dying son, returned to the grave, he found the houris still offering their gifts to the ascetic youth, while nothing is said about his having accepted any of them.

Many are the stories of this kind which the Turkish races have inherited, together with Mohammedanism, chiefly from the Persians and Arabs. Al-naschar's famous Basket is replaced by a Hare*—which a hunter startles, thereby losing it, by the angry stamp with which he attends his exclamation to the Children whom he expects to have by the Wife whom he hopes to marry after he has sold the foal of the Mare which he intends to buy with the money realised by the sale of the Calf which he calculates upon purchasing with the price given him for the skin of the Hare which he is about to shoot. The Judgment of Solomon is well represented by the story† of how Idagä Pi settled a dispute, as to the ownership of a camel's

* Radloff, iv. 260.

† Ibid. iv. 39.

foal, between a Sart and a man who distilled brandy and prepared koumiss for Toktamysch Kan. First he ordered the disputants to tie up, a little apart, the two camels between which lay the mothership of the disputed foal. Then he fastened the foal between them, and beat it till it uttered cries of pain. One of the camels went on stolidly browsing, paying no heed to the poor thing's cries. But the other, the Sart's camel, left off grazing, turned round its head, and with sorrowful eyes regarded the suffering foal. Whereupon Idägä Pi decided that the Sart's camel was the real mother of the foal. Everyone is familiar with the story of Bruce and the Spider; how the royal hero was encouraged by the perseverance of the twice-baffled spinner to carry on his attempt to gain the Scottish sceptre. But the following tale may be less generally known. When Aksak Timur [Timur the Lame, our Tamerlane] was sitting at home one day, mourning over his crippled state, he saw an Ant, "which was just as lame as himself," trying to climb up a wall. But, "as its lame foot hindered it, the Ant kept falling down." At last, however, it succeeded in climbing to the roof of the house. Then Aksak Timur cried, "This Ant, which is as lame as I am, has by striving hard got up to the roof of the house. Why shouldn't I, if I work hard, become a Prince?"

Some of our own fairy stories also have their counterparts in the Turkish tales. In one, Fortunatus travels about the world with his wonderful companions; in another, the Sleeping Beauty slumbers heavily, not to be awakened by any kiss; here, the youngest son marries his Frog-wife; there, Puss-in-Boots, in a fox's shape, unblushingly supplies the wants of a Turkish Marquis of Carabas. It were easy to mention many links between our storyland and that of the wild children of the steppes, to adduce many points of contact between their limited world of thought and our larger intellectual sphere. But it must suffice for the present to give, instead, one specimen of their lyric poetry, in order to convey some idea of their expression of feelings which sway all human hearts, irrespective of the degree of civilisation to which the possessors of those organs may have attained. Here is the literal version of a Song* which comes from the Baraba tribe of Siberian Tartars on the river Om. It must be confessed, by the way, that Turkish names may sound unromantic to unaccustomed ears:—

"Heavily falls the rain; along the brook Ak Jän is wending. Ak Jän, thou art my love; how fares it with Ak Jän?"

"Across the white sea as I sailed, beside the helm I yearned for home. Songs of longing did I sing whenever I thought of the fair one.

"White doves! blue doves! wherefore do ye gather together on the beam? This trouble, this sorrow, wherefore gathers it above my head?"

"Two birds are flying through the heavens—one bound, one free. O sweet sleep of mine at midnight! Could I but waken and kiss her, how glad would be my heart!"

W. R. S. R.

* Radloff, iv. 99.

Young Brown.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER VIII.

BRITISH INDIA.

It was rather a serious business for English residents in India when the *Tanjore* arrived out with reinforcements of raw recruits, and many incomprehensible instructions from the home country. Unseasoned lads marched about in the heat, drank, and died very fast. Middle-aged military dandies from Pall Mall were laid up in scores. The contradictory orders of official personages who knew much of the parliamentary game of question and answer, but little of our Eastern Empire, confused the heads of local authorities already sore perplexed. Moreover, many alarmed personages in high place now began for the first time to understand that they were not beloved by the natives; and they were conscious of an uneasy presentiment that if the British arms received another check they would be all massacred. Not only India proper, but Afghanistan, Cabul, Candahar, Turkistan, Persia, and Koordistan, were watching events, and ripe for revenge against the hated infidels. The Mohammedan revival, of which so much has since been said, had commenced; and had another successful blow at our power been struck after that at Dinapore, it is probable that not a living Frank would have been left to tell the story between Calcutta and Trebizond. When the well-appointed British cavalry therefore rode through the streets to barracks after they had disembarked from the ship, with music playing and colours flying, they were greeted by deafening cheers from their fellow countrymen; and as Colonel Oakes reined in his charger, and made him curvet beneath the balconies where groups of ladies waved them welcome and strewed flowers on their way, he nodded to Lord Kingsgear, and said:

"This looks as if we were going into action pretty soon. The General won't play with his command: we may be sure of that."

Their hopes or expectations were not disappointed. They were marched and countermarched wherever cavalry could do service. Moreover Lord Kingsgear was almost immediately attached to the staff of General Violet, and young Brown accompanied him. They were present at the capture of Secunderabagh—at the taking of Cawnpore and the brilliant affair of Jhansi. The two young men, though so different in rank, were drawn still closer together during the campaign, because they were

often obliged of necessity to occupy the same tent, and to take their meals in sight of each other, if not together. They rode often within earshot of each other for hours, and with no one else to talk to. They were together in many dangers and successes; they were friends and brothers in all but name.

It was not that William Brown, who had been bred a peasant, and was now a soldier in the best sense of the word, presumed in the slightest degree upon the kindness which was shown to him by a nobleman who was his captain. Not all the sad things he had heard of the Wyldwyls in any way influenced or diminished his respect to his superior officer; and indeed he had not imbibed many of the Merchant's democratic theories, or, if the truth must be told, had he very clearly understood or cared to understand them. He was by nature docile, obedient, simple. He knew his duty and he did it; and that is the stuff of which veterans and heroes are made. He never intruded his presence upon Lord Kinsgear unless summoned, or entered into conversation with him without saluting; but he was removed from the rank and file of his regiment by his duties as an orderly; and so the young men were seldom separated for more than an hour or two at a time.

Also Colonel Oakes had kept his word, and young Brown had advanced as rapidly in the regiment as possible for one not born to military honour. He was made lance-corporal, and soon after full corporal; then, after the Jhansi affair, where several non-commissioned officers of the 1st were slain and where young Brown twenty times looked death in the face, he was promoted to a sergeantship. He generally spent much of his time in reading when alone, having no taste for rum and skittles; and he probably owed his life and health to the interest he found in a few books among the Marquis of Kinsgear's kit. As a sergeant having more leisure and ease on his hands, he eagerly devoured works upon history and tactics, and often got absorbed in the study of a good map. He loved to go minutely over the positions of the decisive battles of which he read, with a few pins and corks and a sheet of cardboard. He was a silent and reserved young man, never tired of his own company, and never impatient of solitude. He neither drank nor smoked, and was a very moderate eater, living chiefly upon rice, which seemed to him cleaner and more wholesome than the greasy messes prepared by the Indian cooks. Therefore, as he kept his blood cool, the heat of the climate did not affect him as it did Lord Kinsgear and most of his brother officers. Abstinence was not, perhaps, any great credit to him. It was of course easy enough for young Brown to do as he liked about eating and drinking. No one pressed him to indulge in iced Clicquot and old Madeira, of which there was no great supply; but at General Violet's own table, where the Marquis dined whenever there was a halt long enough for the tents to be pitched and the commissariat waggons to come up, the case was very different. Thirsty young aides-de-camp who had been galloping about under an Indian sun with field-glasses held to their eyes in a blinding dust, were glad to slake

their parched throats and revive their spirits with as much wine, pawnee, pale ale and cigars as they could get. Tiffin, and sherry cobblers, and cheroots and punch were set out under the tent, or in the quarters of one or other of them, all day long; and the Marquis of Kinsgear, who was not of a very strong constitution, would sometimes lie down in the small hours under his own canvas with throbbing temples, and a head which felt like a lump of lead upon his shoulders.

One evening after a very late sitting with the General's staff, where Windham, Seaton, Grant, and Rowcroft had been all present to fight their battles over again, the Marquis of Kinsgear returned to his tent with a heavy footstep, made somewhat unsteady by the length of an Oriental dinner where the hookah and the nargilly had succeeded the wine, and the younger men had gone off to eat anchovy toast and drink again afresh afterwards. Young Brown, who had come into the captain's tent with a troop roster which needed inspecting, was so immersed in a book he had found on the table that he did not hear the young officer enter the tent, and Lord Kinsgear went silently up to him and looked for a minute over his shoulder and down at the book without speaking.

They would have made a fine picture of Work and Play: the one so calm and placid, so tranquil and happy; the other hot, fevered, dissatisfied, and sorrowful.

The Marquis seemed to feel the contrast, and to stand rebuked before himself. He was not naturally given to excess, but he had been of late beguiled into intemperance by the contagion of example, the influence of companionship, and the fear of ridicule. He almost envied the studious sergeant, who had passed so quiet and profitable an evening with a good author, for he saw that young Brown had been reading Macaulay's bright description of the gallant death at Killiecrankie of Bonny Dundee.

"How goes the day?" asked the Marquis, repeating the latest words of Claverhouse, as he remembered that deathless and beautiful story.

"Well for King James, my lord," answered the young man, smiling and saluting his officer.

"Then it matters the less for me," added the Marquis; and there was a sad tone in his voice, as if the words were an augury of evil.

CHAPTER IX.

RULE, BRITANNIA.

GENERAL Violet, with a few handfuls of British troops, was advancing to meet the enemy. It was a fearful march through a country devastated by fire and sword and famine. Often as far as the eye could reach from a high hill top not a tree, nor a living thing, nor a human habitation could be

seen. Sometimes they passed by heaps of rubbish, which a few months ago had been smiling villages; and the bones of men, horses, and elephants, dried by the sun, bleached by the wind, and half-gnawed by jackals, strewed the way at irregular intervals.

Every now and then, as the slender column of Europeans toiled through the dust and heat of an Indian summer, Lord Kinsgear, or another of General Violet's aides-de-camp, would gallop up to the front and salute, with the awful announcement that some scores or hundreds of the rebels had been captured.

"Taken with arms in their hands?" would drawl the General, in that affected voice of his; and if the reply was "Yes, sir," as it usually was, he would wave his white, womanly hand gracefully, as one who would have done quickly with a tiresome subject, and add, "To the rear; O yes, to the rear;" which meant that they were to be shot—and they were shot there and then, just as if the unknown clerk at the India Office had signed their death-warrant for execution at the Old Bailey.

Indeed, there was no help for it. Prisoners were brought into the British camp and line of march in such numbers from the flying hosts of Beni Mahdo and Ferozeshah, after the successes of Lugard Mitchell and Lord Clyde, that it was impossible to detain or to feed them. There was not a crumb of bread, or an ounce of meat, but what the English wanted for themselves, nor a draught of water; and to drag forward a rabble rout of prisoners, more numerous than themselves, would have been an experiment too dangerous for any general to risk. So thousands of these dusky-skinned Indians were sent daily and hourly into eternity, without any fuss or outcry beyond the whistling of balls through the air, and the dull thud with which they sank buried in living flesh. Fortunately there were no newspapers to look on, and scream "Murder!" Our own correspondent kept enterprisingly out of the way. If he had not done so, General Violet had privately determined to hang him, because it was no time for trifling, and writing sensation articles about what could not be helped. When a clerk has once loosed and unchained the dogs of war, we all know how they moisten their fangs, whether ink is shed for the fate of those they tear or not.

General Violet overtook his enemy rather suddenly at last. It was during the hottest part of an Indian day when the pickets came galloping in with news of the enemy, and the pale face of England's bravest general became tinged with a pink as delicate as the colour upon a piece of Sèvres porcelain.

"We have got them now, gentlemen," said he, turning with a languid smile to his staff; and in the same calm, polite language he would have used on parade, he made the necessary arrangements for the coming battle before a standard was unfurled. Ten minutes afterwards the opening thunder of the Begum's guns cast a death shade over the ranks of the little army.

"We must hit hard, and hit quickly," said the General affably; and

as the trumpets sounded the advance, regiment after regiment, or what remained of them, moved down into action, with music playing, and colours flying—the bagpipes of the Highlanders answering the fifes and drums of the English, and some Irish shouts of “Erin-go-bragh.”

The battle began with infantry, as usual, and General Violet watched it with his staff from a commanding position. The Indians fought like wild cats: but their nervous excitement, terrible as it was, and frantic as the clerk had made them, was no match for the dogged pertinacity and the burly beef-fed strength of the mighty Western islanders by whom they were opposed. They came on again and again, furiously, drunk with excitement, drunk with bhang; but they were always beaten back, and they seemed to break themselves when they met the British troops, as waves break upon a rock. By-and-by their fire began to slacken, and there were signs of wavering in the Asiatic ranks when the smoke cleared away.

From the height which General Violet had occupied during the battle, with the officers of his staff around him, he could now see through his field-glasses that the enemy was bringing forward some teams of artillery horses with the lasso tackle attached to them, and was evidently preparing to retreat over the Nepaulese frontier, carrying his guns and treasure with him.

The General looked round to his officers, his eyes agleam with the fire of battle, and there was a mute appeal in them, as if he were about to call upon brave men for desperate service.

The Marquis of Kingsgear rose in his stirrups, and bent forward with eager response in his face, while the boldest held their breath for a time.

The English Commander turned to the Quartermaster, who was close at his side, and dictated an order, which that officer quickly embodied in a few pencil lines, written upon a slip of paper resting upon his sabretache. It was very short:—

“General Violet wishes the 1st Lancers to advance rapidly to the front, and try to prevent the enemy carrying away the guns. Immediate.

(Signed) “A. BRACEBRIDGE,”

which was the name of the Quartermaster. Nothing more—few words to brave men.

General Violet gazed for an instant upon the clouds of Indian horsemen scouring the plain beneath him, and the fierce hail of iron which ploughed it up, so that nothing could pass through it save by miracle, and with a natural movement not wanting in chivalrous grace, he involuntarily raised his plumed hat and saluted the Marquis of Kingsgear. Then laying his hand upon the young lord's bridle rein, he said: “You see your regiment posted at the skirt of the wood yonder. All depends on the speed with which our squadrons advance. Now or never is the time when cavalry may be used with effect.”

Lord Kingsgear brought down the point of his sword in salute, and the next moment he was gone. Old grey-beards still remember how the Plantagenet noble rode away. The hill on which the General's staff was posted was a thousand feet above the level of the plain beneath, and its sides were steep and rugged. Neither horse nor horseman faltered, but went down it straight as the crow flies, swift as an arrow.

Settling himself firmly in his seat, and taking a strong grasp of the rein with his bridle arm, he seemed to lift his horse off the ground, and he descended with a swoop as true as a falcon's to the wood side where his regiment was posted, impatient of the delays which had hitherto kept them idle, and longing to take part in the honours of the fight. He had no consciousness of his danger. In that supreme moment his thoughts turned only to some minute improvement in his horse's bit, about which he had talked the day before with William Brown; and he congratulated himself upon it, as it enabled him to dodge and distance every attempt at capture, so well it kept his striding thorough-bred in hand.

Colonel Oakes was sitting in the saddle in front of his troops, and stroking his charger's mane, when Lord Kingsgear came speeding down with the General's order, and never was command more welcome to a soldier.

"Now, men," he called out, in a deep, sober voice, "remember what I have told you, and keep together." So he put spurs to old Sampson, his favourite charger, and cantered once down the ranks to see that all was well. Having thus done all things in order, the Colonel turned quietly to his people, and said, "The regiment will advance."

Now when once a body of cavalry is in motion, it must dispense for a time with orders; and though the trumpets may be sounding "a gallop," or "a charge," it must rely chiefly for guidance upon the leader of the force. Colonel Oakes therefore placed himself quite alone, at a distance of about half-a-dozen yards in advance of his first line, and began to lead with perfect steadiness, while Lord Kingsgear, unscathed as yet, fell into his proper place, and headed his own troop.

So in serried ranks the small group of European horsemen moved along the plain, apparently enveloped in clouds of dusky enemies, and unable to see before them from the smoke around, although it was every moment riven by a lurid glare, which showed that another messenger of death had been sent among them.

For some time both men and horses behaved as well as in the riding-school. As often as a death gap was made in the ranks, the troopers closed up when they had ridden clear of the disturbing cause, and went on as before. The crash of lancers overthrown only alternated with the dry word of command—"Back right flank!" "Keep back, Sergeant Brown!" "Close into your centre!" "Look to your dressing; right squadron keep back!"

But as they drew nearer to the enemy, the regiment gradually became more impatient of restraint. The troopers, whose numbers were thinning so fast, longed fiercely to close with the foe whose guns were galling

them ; and a feeling of contempt for the enemy added to their fury. Even Lord Kingsgear, who commanded the squadron of direction, became anxious to get out of fire, and endeavouring with that view to force the pace, pressed forward so far as to come almost alongside of Colonel Oakes's bridle-arm. The sagacious veteran laid his sword at once across the Captain's breast, and called out to him with frank good-humour to " follow his leader," in a voice which rang above the din, like the sound of a clarion. Otherwise, not a word passed the English leader. His faith in his cause was very knightly and whole-hearted. He never fell into any doubt concerning the path of his duty, and his troops followed him, as troops only can do when led straightforward.

At length, however, not even one of the best cavalry officers in the service could restrain some of the younger men and officers from dashing in front, and the line was hurled forward and broken up into racing horsemen. The ceremonious advance of disciplined soldiery was changed into an ungoverned onset. The steeple-chasing spirit of English sportsmen broke out, some trying to pass their comrades, some determining not to yield an inch.

William Brown was one of the last who retained some command over his horse, but a flesh-wound in the neck from a rifle-ball made the brute lose temper. He was then within sight of the Indian battery, and a torrent of flame burst forth in front of him. The next moment his horse made a mighty jump, a plunge, a scramble, and he was in the midst of the enemy. Far divided from his comrades, he had driven full into the Indian ranks, and being instantly confronted by a gigantic Nepaulese, he soon came to grief, because he incautiously gave point to his adversary. His sword, driven home to the hilt, ran the Indian through, and he fell headlong, drawing down with him in his fall the sword which had slain him ; and Sergeant Brown, with all his strength, was unable to unloose the blade from that ponderous body, or to disengage himself from the wrist-knot. It resulted, that though he kept his saddle, he was tethered to the ground by his own sword-arm. It is not an uncommon case in battle. Five minutes afterwards he was knocked down ; but soon rose again, and in the midst of the strife became so eager to prevent the enemy from hauling off one of the pieces, that, at a moment when the six miserable artillery-horses and their swarthy drivers were the subject of a raging combat, he disengaged the gun from the harness, and presently heard the deep voice of Colonel Oakes damning him in tones of admiration. " Catch this horse, Sergeant Brown," shouted the Colonel, cutting down an Indian chief, as he burst like thunder into a shrinking group of Asiatics, and was lost in flame and smoke. That seemed the Colonel's way of thanking his trooper.

Meantime, Lord Kingsgear, who was not a good swordsman, and conscious of his deficiency, considered for a moment how he should best act when his troops broke away from him. He determined to rely on the main strength of his horse, hurled at full speed against the enemy ;

and singling out an Indian chief whom he perceived to be the leader of the opposing force, he resolved to overthrow him by the shock of a heavy concussion. So his lordship forgot the stiff lessons of the riding-school, clenched a rein in each hand ; got his head somewhat down like a bull preparing to butt ; and as though he were forcing a cantankerous horse at a nasty jump, drove full at the Indian. The man fell as if struck by a catapult, and the next moment Lord Kinsgear had broken into the centre of the enemy, and blinded by smoke, scorched by fire, hacked by a dozen scimitars, he turned to bay, and defended himself by twirling his sword like a millwheel. He was hurled from his saddle, however, speedily, and beaten to his knees with an Indian lance thrust deep into his breast, when there was a mighty clash above him of contending horsemen, and then there came all at once a mist before his eyes.

On recovering his senses he found his head supported on Sergeant Brown's knees, and around them was an open space covered with the remains of the wounded and the dying. The Indians had gone down before the English swords like corn before the sickle ; still the day was not won : and unless William Brown could assist his captain to remount and take him to a place of safety, they might both be shot down at any moment. The sergeant did not hesitate. Hoisting Lord Kinsgear into his own saddle, he supported him to the rear, walking slowly through the ghastly scene around him, where dying men to whom no help could come shrieked madly for water, and broken-backed horses, raising themselves on their forelegs, looked piteously for help, in their horrible anguish. Every moment he heard the ping of the bullet, the sighing and humming of the cannon-ball, and the harsh whirr of jagged fragments cast from bursting shells, with the plunge of round shot as it buried itself with a slosh in the trunk of some mounted horseman.

But he bore the Marquis with unflinching pluck to the ambulance-waggons, supporting him in the saddle with hand and arm as he walked beside him. Having there given his captain over to the surgeon of the regiment, he rode back to the front and took part in the final charge which completed the victory of the day. The Indians, beaten at all points, threw themselves off their horses and crept under them to find shelter. They whined and entreated for quarter, grovelling in the dust in their abasement, after their guns, to which they attributed an almost miraculous power, were silenced. But then occurred that fearful sight which shows how grim a thing is war. Some of our men, and even of our officers, performed ghastly wonders in the way of slaughter. They were seized with the blood phrenzy, and in the close of the battle did what they could to confirm the belief of the maddening effects of that wholesale killing which is said not to be murder. Some raged wildly against the miserable wretches who cringed and cried for mercy, slashing them down with reeking hands already besmeared by gore ; and others made ceaseless use of their revolvers. Among the few who tried to check this ghastly butchery of the unresisting was Sergeant Brown ; and again he heard the

manly voice of Colonel Oakes above the crash and roar of the fight, speaking words of approval to him.

It was a great success for the English arms, one of the most decisive victories of the war. It occasioned the foundation of a new order of knighthood. General Violet, who gained it, was raised to the rank of Commander-in-Chief. The largest amount of loot and prize-money gained by any British force since the peace with the Burmese fell into the hands of the conquerors; and it disposed of what was called the Indian difficulty for nearly eleven months.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

UPON the fortunes of William Brown, the Sepoy Mutiny had a most favourable effect, however inconvenient its results may have been to several other persons. It raised him, for one thing, from the ranks of the army, and obtained for him a commission in Her Majesty's service. The advancement of the young soldier was not brought about very easily. Lord George Wyldwyl, who had just been named Commander-in-Chief, took the nobleman's side of the case, and declared that promotions from the ranks lowered the "tone" of the army, whatever that might mean. When his lordship, however, had conversed with General Violet and Colonel Oakes, he promised to offer no active opposition to the commission being made out, but he added, significantly, that "it must be done in the usual way." Now, among the precious legacies which have been bequeathed to us as a people, is the inestimable blessing of "Routine;" and therefore, when Lord George Wyldwyl remarked that young Brown's commission would have to be made out in the usual way, he meant in the routine way, which was saying a great deal more than he expressed. Accordingly, six weeks after the recommendation of Sergeant Brown's immediate superior, that his conduct in the field should be rewarded by a commission, a very formal document was received from head-quarters. It was marked "confidential," but its contents of course transpired; and they were to the effect, that "Lord George Wyldwyl was unable to accede to a request which was so little in accordance with the good of the service, and might interfere with the proper discipline which it was necessary to preserve between officers and men, by confounding the distinction of ranks. Lord George also considered it right to add, that the wife of an officer raised from the ranks often felt herself in a false position among the ladies of her husband's regiment, and that the apparent honour conferred upon him by a commission was really nothing but a source of vexation and expense to himself, as well as dissatisfaction to those gentlemen who had obtained their military rank in the customary manner by purchase, and who had sufficient means not only to maintain their position, but to join in the

expenses and hospitalities of the mess without inconvenience." This document, which resumed in a windy and rigmarole manner all the platitudes which were current in garrison towns, to show that money made all the difference between a commander and a private, was signed by the august and puissant name of Bodger, Sir Ajax Bodger, K.C.B., K.S.I., &c. &c. &c., being at that time Adjutant-General of Her Majesty's forces in India.

"George knows nothing about it—I dined with him yesterday," said General Violet, referring to the Commander-in-Chief.

"We must try again," observed Colonel Oakes; "the beggars never give in the first time. Young Brown has fairly won his commission, and by jingo he shall have it. The mess has sent in a round robin about it to Lord George."

"Won his commission!" drawled the General, shaking some eau-de-Cologne languidly over his handkerchief; "he deserves to be made a captain instead of a cornet. I never saw a cooler fellow of his age under fire—a salamander, I declare. By the way, Oakes, you will be glad to hear I have got him the Victoria Cross on your report. They could not refuse it him, though they tried hard. Let us go and talk to the Commander-in-Chief; perhaps he will give us a wrinkle."

The two officers ordered round their horses, and it being towards the cool of the day, they rode off to catch Lord George Wyldwyl before he went out for his ride. He could give them no help about young Brown, however.

"Things must take their course, Ned," said the Commander-in-Chief of the Queen's troops to the most famous general under him. "I can do nothing, you know."

"I suppose there's a way of managing it if we could only find out how to pull the wires?" answered General Violet. "You and I and Tom Oakes together ought to be able to get a cornet's commission. Eh, George?"

"I don't know that," replied the Commander-in-Chief, scratching his ear in a perplexed manner. "Both Bodger and his brother-in-law are very obstinate men when their backs are up. However, you know I will help you if I can, Ned; and if you take my advice you'll use private influence. When you can contrive among you to get young Brown's commission made out, I promise to sign it."

"Hang it, the chief is a brick!" said General Violet as he and Colonel Oakes rode away from head quarters. "I am almost sorry he is going home, though I must now in the ordinary course of things succeed him. But we have not done our work yet. How are we to get at Bodger? I don't know him well enough to ask a favour; do you, Tom?"

"Never saw him in my life, either in action or in a hunting field, where most of my acquaintanceships have been made," returned the Colonel. "He generally happens to be ill on gunpowder days, and performs prodigies of humanitarianism among the wounded. He writes letters for

them to their friends, and that sort of thing. I never heard of his doing it in peace time."

"You see these great characters take their own road to glory," laughed General Violet. "It does not much matter; they always get there."

"Then you think it is all U.P. about young Brown's commission?" asked Colonel Oakes.

"I think it is something deuced like it, unless we can square Bodger," answered the General. "But there is Lady Laura Petty-Pells and her ponies. She ought to be able to do the trick, if she will, Tom. She keeps open house here, and nobody ever refuses her anything, on principle."

Her ladyship bowed over her parasol whip to the two heroes of the latest great battle which had saved India.

"Haaah ye, General?" she screamed in that highly pitched voice which delights the fashion. "Haaah ye, Colonel? What do you both think of my ponies? Lord Hanaper has sent them out in exchange for the Rancee's shawls I took home last time I went to England."

"They are worthy of the Queen of Sheba," replied General Violet gallantly, alluding to the title by which her ladyship was best known in the drawing-rooms of Calcutta.

"They are quite thorough bred," screamed her ladyship again. "Lord Hanaper bought them of Lady Selina Bodger, whose husband you know is at the Mundane Office. Quite a charming person, who has the best horses in London."

General Violet, hearing the omnipotent name of Bodger, looked towards Colonel Oakes, as much as to signify, "Now then here goes;" and then he addressed himself to her ladyship.

"We want to present a petition, great Queen," said the General, stroking the beautiful Arab which he rode at a smooth canter within an inch of her ladyship's phaeton wheels.

"Then one of you must go away," screamed Lady Laura at the top of her voice. "It is sinful waste to burn two heroes at the same time. I shall want you to make love to me one after the other."

"When will my turn come, Lady Lo?" enquired Colonel Oakes, who was nearly related to the Calcutta beauty, though they had not met for a dozen years, whereas General Violet was one of her intimates.

"It will come whenever you can find your way into my house without leaving a card and running away," cried her ladyship shrilly. "I am at home every day at tiffin."

General Violet was a prime favourite with Lady Laura Petty-Pells. It was even whispered that he was one of those who sighed in her train. He was also extremely popular with ladies. He knew how and when to talk to them. Lady Laura was delighted to have the brave and kind-hearted exquisite escorting her carriage in the first flush of his great renown, and with all Calcutta looking on to envy her. Her face was all

alight with triumph and pleasure. She determined to give a ball, two balls and a dinner (or two dinners and one ball, which should it be?), to show this illustrious paladin in her chains before the bloom of his valiant deeds wore off him.

As soon as General Violet, however, spoke of Sir Ajax, her ladyship pinched up her lips, and evinced extreme annoyance. "To say the truth, General," observed her ladyship in tones almost natural, and very much lower than usual, so that not even her miniature groom could hear what she said, "Sir Ajax Bodger is not a gentleman."

CHAPTER XI.

RAISED FROM THE RANKS.

"How are you, William Brown?" enquired a hearty voice of the young sergeant as he walked rather disconsolately about the streets of Calcutta during the inexplicable postponement of his hopes of promotion. The next moment the young man's right hand was held in a grip of iron, while two kind, honest blue eyes looked out from a rugged old face at him.

"You must come and eat a haggis with me, if you are off duty," said the Scotch Merchant whose acquaintance he had made on board the *Tanjore*. "I see that you have risen to the rank of Sergeant; and it is a grand credit to you in these times, unless ye had some interest in the regiment, the which I mind me now was the case through that minister boddy who came on board with your mother. Poor lassie, her face reminded me of my sister's when she lie down so pale and fainted. Mayhap, lad, it was that which first drew me on to take a fancy to ye."

William Brown, though dispirited enough, was glad to meet the Merchant, because, when we are dejected and out of conceit with ourselves, any kind voice is welcome, and his was of the kindest. He went home with the Merchant too, and found a plentiful lunch or tiffin, the name by which Mr. Brown disguised an early dinner, spread out. Very curious and characteristic was the half-concealed sense of degradation which the well-to-do Merchant felt at asking a common soldier to sit at the same table with him, and he scrupulously called him "Sergeant," and spoke to him with an awkwardly assumed air of patronage before the well-to-do clerks who boarded with him. Had William Brown worn gold lace instead of worsted, the Merchant would have been conscious of some inferiority, military officers being really the princes of all countries, and common soldiers the Pariahs of every people.

Young Brown, however, possessed the invaluable mental armour of what is called "a thick skin." He was by no means sensitive or prickly-minded, probably because he was in robust health, and too honestly occupied with the business of life to be self-conscious. The Scottish

Merchant's dinner was excellent, and cooked by a Scotch cook, with as much Scotch material as possible. There was dried salmon and haddock, potted game, shortbread and marmalade, all from the Land of Cakes, with amber ale of potent strength, and some extremely fragrant whisky, all of which things form refreshing diet in hot countries.

"I'll not ask ye to tak' ony spirits, Mr. Broon," said the owner of these good things, helping himself, "because whisky is not good for the young; but I'll aye drink your health and success to you;" and he helped himself.

The Merchant spoke in that pleasant and kindly Scotch accent which was probably as deeply impressed upon his mind as on his tongue, and which few have heard often without finding that their hearts warmed to it as a Highlander's beneath the tartan. It is as impossible to convey any idea of it by the incorrect spelling of English words as it would be to make roses out of heather-bloom by the use of coarse paint. To the present writer it has represented so much that is great and good in human nature that he can seldom listen to it without that emotion which is made up equally of memory and hope. It reminds him of the many honest lips from which it came, and seems to convey the prophecy that he may yet make another friend.

The taste of his native liquor seemed to open Mr. Brown's heart, and presently afterwards he said, "I've been thinking, Sergeant, that ye'll not like to remain for ever with a red coat upon your back and a musket on your arm; so if you would wish to enter my office, I'll see about buying your discharge one of these days. I can give you a hundred pound a year, your board and house room, for a moderate amount of work daily."

"Thank you, sir," replied the soldier straightforwardly, "but I like the army better than any other calling, and my superiors have promised to do their best to get me a commission." The Sergeant's hopes had revived after a good dinner, and he was now disposed to take a more cheerful view of his prospects than he had done an hour or two before.

"Whew!" exclaimed Mr. Brown, making a whistling sound peculiarly Scotch, and feeling an enormous increase of respect for his guest. "So you have distinguished yourself as highly as that, have you, my lad? How comes it then that ye have not got your commission already? It is getting a long while now since the last battle was fought, and I imagine ye'll not get your commission out of the parade ground."

The Sergeant then told his host as much as he knew of the obstacles which had arisen in his way to advancement. He did not know much but he was aware that General Violet and Colonel Oakes had both recommended him, also that the officers of his regiment had sent in a round robin in his favour to head-quarters, and that nothing had come of it. Moreover for the last few days Colonel Oakes had plainly avoided the subject, though formerly he had been very ready to talk of it, and had tried in various rough good-natured ways to make up for his disappointment.

Mr. Brown listened very attentively to all he said, and then answered, slowly stroking his chin, "I am thinking that you have no friend at Court, Mr. Brown, and that the true hitch lies there. Tell me now, do ye mind that ye ever offended anyone who could put a spoke in your wheel, and prevent it turning round? I've oftentimes heard of such mishaps."

The Sergeant declared that he had never consciously given offence to any one; that he had been upon active service all through the Mutiny, and that he was well considered by all his superiors, without exception.

"Still ye might like enough be hated by some of the officials without knowing it, though if ye have been kept out of their way, that can scarcely be. I apprehend, therefore, Mr. Brown, that it is pure wrongheadedness on their part. But are ye quite sure o' the General and the Colonel? They are, I am free to acknowledge, brave and good men, but in these matters ye will learn, if you live, that folks are not over trustworthy."

The Sergeant readily answered for both these officers, and then a queer sort of smile broke over the Scotch Merchant's face.

"Well," he observed dryly, "maybe I may be able to serve you better than a bigger man. I am tendering for a contract for military saddles, and I have to see Mr. Toll Bodger, the storemaster, about it no farther off than to-morrow. He is related somehow to Sir Ajax, who has all British India under his thumb, and is as strong, through his connections in the Governor-General's Council, as he is in his proper department. I'll make you no promises," added the Merchant, "but if it's true that you haven't given any personal cause of affront to the Bodger family or their friends, I can see a short way to your epaulettes—though you might do better, laddie, you might do better if you would put a pen behind your ear, as I have done."

Young Brown then returned to barracks, thinking very little more of the Merchant or his conversation. He had that easy creed which comes of sound sleep and a good digestion. The world was pleasant to him: everything seemed to him well as it was, and likely to become still better. There was nothing morbid—nothing of what soldiers call the "cocktail," about him. Certainly his ambition and self-esteem had been aroused by the chance of promotion so far beyond every reasonable expectation he could have formed on enlisting. He had thought of what the Curate would say at home there at Wakefield-in-the-Marsh, and how his mother's fond eyes would kindle, and how erect his father would stand when they silently shook hands next time. And then he thought of what he would and could do for his brothers Jack and Gill, and Tom and Harry. It was an honest trait in the young fellow's character, that his day-dream had not spoiled him, and that even when indulging it he never thought of denying his humble origin, or casting off any one of his poor peasant kinsfolk in the far Oxfordshire village away in the homeland, but that all his schemes of future happiness centred there. Even Susan Jincks was not forgotten, though he often wondered how little the remem-

brance of her seemed to move him. He recollected his child sweetheart indeed very much as a pretty picture he had seen long ago, perhaps in another state of existence. His own identity with the village boy of three years before was not quite clear to him. He was sitting alone in his barrack-room on the evening of the day after he had dined with the Scotch Merchant, and admiring the solemn beauty of an Indian night, with its large moon and stars looking so near and familiar, when he heard the voice of Lord Kinsgear faintly calling to him from an open window.

Hastening to his Captain's quarters in reply to this summons, he found the Marquis propped up by cushions, as he had been ever since that day when the sergeant had carried him at risk of his life from under the Indian fire. His lordship did not seem to gain strength. The surgeons said he was a sickly patient; that he had inherited a bad constitution, and that he had not enough vitality to heal his wounds.

"Brown," said the Marquis feebly, for he had latterly accustomd himself to break down all social distinctions between them when they were alone, "you saved my life a few weeks ago, and the least I can do is to try and lessen your sorrow now. Prepare yourself, my poor fellow, for bad news."

"I must bear it, my lord, whatever it be," returned the soldier, looking very straight and stalwart as he stood upright, and prepared for evil fortune as firmly as he would have confronted an armed enemy; for he had not yet learned what terrible weapons there are in the hands of Fate, and had never once heard the fall of a thunderbolt from heaven. He heard it then for the first time.

"Why do you say 'My Lord'?" asked the sick man, with affectionate petulance. "Come here; let me have you near me while you suffer. Perhaps I may find an antidote, though I must give you poison, poor fellow."

The Marquis fell back exhausted on his pillow, and closed his eyes before he resumed. "On my desk there, at the other side of the room, you will find two letters. The one came by the English mail this afternoon, under my father's cover. It is from Mr. Mowledy, the clergyman of Wakefield. He has also been so kind as to write to me, begging that I would prepare you for the contents of his letter, which is, you see, bordered with black. He must be a Christian gentleman, that country parson, and he is a good friend of yours, Brown.

"The other letter," added Lord Kinsgear after a pause, which showed how painful a labour it was for him to speak, "was brought only ten minutes ago. I see it is official, and must bring you good tidings, though it was sent with 'Mr. Brown's compliments,' which I do not quite understand. You recollect the old Scotch contractor who came out with us, and hated me for being a Marquis?" The wounded nobleman smiled sadly, and took the sergeant's hand in his, as if to keep him from the momentous news which awaited him a few minutes longer. He even gazed up into his face with some anxiety, and as he did so the one young

man looked like the pale and wasted reflection of the other, seen through some distorting glass, which marred its attitude and fair proportions. Having satisfied himself that the sergeant was calm-minded and stout-hearted enough to meet his sorrow steadily, "Read your letters now, Brown," he said; "but take the black-bordered one first, and let me hold the other for you till you have read the worst."

Then side by side, descending upon him from on high together, came, as they always come, suddenly, wonderfully, and without warning, the supreme joy and sorrow of his life. In a few short moments he had learned from a scrap of paper that his whole family had gone down to their death at sea in a ship of which he had never so much as heard before. There was the paper in his hand, quite mute and silent, yet so big with news. It had been pricked all over with holes, and fumigated, till the writing on it was almost unintelligible, lest it should be a messenger of evil, and yet it had stricken him to the heart.

As the young man stood, appalled and stunned by the tremendous blow which had smitten him, he felt the soft frail fingers of the Marquis close gently on his own. "Read the other letter now, Brown, pray. Read it at once, for my sake."

Sergeant Brown took the official envelope mechanically in his hand, broke the great seal of it, and took something out. He could not see what it was, and held the envelope with its contents before him, one in his right hand, the other in his left, as though he offered them for Lord Kinsgear's inspection, with military stiffness. He evidently did not know what they were, and all his thoughts were far away in his mother's grave, where the willows wept in the quiet church-yard, and beneath the troubled waves of Mona, where the *Royal Oak* and her living freight of human souls went down.

Fortunately he was a very young man. He was not yet seared by misfortune, so that it scars and dilapidates body and mind, shattering them with each successive stroke. The fountain of his tears was not yet dried up, and the Lethæan waters, which wash away so much of our early anguish, came to his relief. Two large drops, great as storm rain, coursed each other slowly down his ghostly cheeks, and fell with a dull sound upon the floor.

"Cry, Brown, and sit down here beside me," said the young lord, with brotherly tenderness. "You need not go away, for we are comrades now. That despatch announces that you have been appointed a Cornet in the 1st Lancers, and to-morrow you are to have the Victoria Cross."

CHAPTER XII.

RACE.

WILLIAM BROWN felt much more at large and at his ease in his new position. He took to it naturally, much as a duck takes to water, though bred in a

hen-roost, or as a race-horse falls into his stride at a gallop as though he had never been forced to trot uneasily in the shafts of a butcher's cart or a Hansom cab. The lad had the bearing and manners natural to a gentleman—the proud soldierly head, the upright mien, and clearly cut features, the white shapely hands, and well-defined nails. There is as much difference between men as between animals; and in all the inferior creatures there is a general appearance of stumpiness, coarseness, and clumsiness; whereas in the king beasts all is fine, cleanly made, and graceful.

While these lines are writing there is a bird-show at the Crystal Palace, and the strong point of the show is a collection of canaries comprising no less than thirty-five out of seventy-seven of the different classes into which those little birds may be divided by observant naturalists. To one of these varieties, the original canary of the Canary Islands stands in the same relation as did William to his comrades in the rank and file of the army; or as the wild crab-apple stands to the finest fruit of the gardener's catalogue. The breeding even of so small a thing as a canary is a cunning mystery; and the gradations are infinite, beginning with the lizard-coated songster of the islands, and ending with those costly birds bred to the exact shade of yellow, and just marked with a dark feather in some appointed spot of head or wing. It takes many generations to produce the finer tints and markings, and of course the fanciers sometimes try to steal a march on time, as an enriched usurer buys a noble name; but there is a law of nature which no clipping, drawing, trimming, painting, or colouring of the bird's plumage can set aside; and the poor winged creature, however bedizened it may be, will neither sing nor look rightly if it is not thorough-bred. Therefore the great object of the canary-breeders, who are a philosophical money-making class (at present much unconcerned with the government of this or any other nation), is to produce a bird of a fine shade of yellow; and it is certain that, as a matter of fact, it actually can be produced "ticked," or marked either on the wing or on the back, the breast, the neck, or the top of the head, as desired. Such birds practically may be bred to a single feather, though it is important to note that hundreds of eggs may have been laid and hatched before the exact plume makes its appearance.

So it matters little where or when a man may have been born: he is certain to rise up to his own level in every state of society which the world has seen; not perhaps in name, but in fact. Provided only he possesses the rudiments of education, he will come out of any dark and fiery trial whatsoever into the pure daylight of heaven the first time he has a chance if there is anything in him; and we all have chances enough and to spare—some that we spoil, some that we lose, some that we throw away disdainfully.

The first steps on the ladder of life are always a little difficult for a man who has to make his own way quite unaided up it. But then aid so soon comes to him in the ordinary course of things, if his footing is firm

and his eye steady, so that he does not tumble down in the mud disgracefully at first starting. There is a natural instinct among the better class of people to protect and aid the young. A bold honest lad wins friendship and love without effort, and they smoothe many difficulties over which their elders have to stumble painfully enough. Also the first gleam of success is almost certain to go on increasing till it becomes quite a halo, if not put out by any malevolent influence, and one honour is always security for more.

William Brown had been a mere village boy at seventeen years old; and in the usual course of things he could hardly have expected to culminate in anything higher than a farrier or a wheelwright. But in his veins flowed the blood of a race of kings, many of whom were of an indifferent sort, or had come to nothing, and some were fools, some rogues, some scoundrels of a deeper dye (just like the spoiled or addled eggs of the canaries), till at last here was a bird of the true feather, a man of the right stamp. His fate was uncertain till Mr. Mowledy had taught him to read, just as the canary would have no value if it could not sing, and was lost in a hole where no one could find it out. But from the moment he had learned his alphabet thoroughly, and could put pen to paper without difficulty, he might have been left naked in the streets in the morning, but he would have been found supporting himself creditably and winning good opinions three days afterwards.

Moreover, as good luck never comes alone, young Brown was presently appointed aide-de-camp to Lord George Wyldwyl, who had lately become Lord Punjaub with remainder to his daughter, the Hon. Miss Amabel Wyldwyl. That young lady was at present residing in England with the Marchioness (Abigail) of Newcomen, a rather necessitous peeress, of irreproachable character, who had consented to act the part of governess and companion to her rich and beautiful relative for such a handsome consideration as the great Indian soldier's means enabled him to afford without inconvenience. Indeed, there had been quite a public competition among the General's poor relations as soon as it was known she was to be sent to England to complete her education; and the old soldier had been put over and over again to the blush by their rapacity and importunities.

Cornet Brown owed his position as aide-de-camp to this distinguished military man, firstly of course to the warm recommendation of his nephew the Marquis of Kinsgear, who never rested till he had got the place for him; but he kept it and won the personal friendship of his chief by his own merits; for patronage and recommendations at best will only carry any man a certain distance unless there is very high rank to back them. Young Brown, however, was at heart a soldier; and as his chief was a soldier too—brave, single-hearted, simple, sincere—they had only to be once brought together to understand each other thoroughly; so that within six months of his appointment Lord Punjaub had given over the management of his stable, his household, his accounts, and the whole of his large hospitable establishment to his aide-de-camp, who accepted it with good-humoured

readiness, doing all that was required of him and nothing more, in a quiet, easy way.

Among the things which should be noticed as most conducing to success in life is having the good luck to serve under a congenial chief for the first time. There are many admirable people who cannot agree with each other more than oil and water, which are both good things, but cannot mingle. Now William Brown and Lord Punjaub liked each other because they understood each other.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

LORD PUNJAUB.

THE famous Indian General and Administrator, long known as Lord George Wyldwyl, was a younger brother of the late Duke of Courthope, and consequently uncle to the present peer. The late Duchess, his sister-in-law, had remained so long without giving birth to a son and heir, that he had naturally expected to succeed to the title and estates, when the present Duke was so unexpectedly born in the presence of Countess Pencarrow. Then all his hopes had vanished; vanished so suddenly, so surprisingly, that many rumours went abroad upon the subject.

Among these reports there was especially one which obtained much credence with persons who are generally well-informed concerning the affairs of the nobility. It was therein stated that the newly-born Marquis of Kingsgear was neither the son of the Duke nor of the Duchess of Courthope, but of the late Lord Alfred Wyldwyl and the Countess of Pencarrow, whom he had secretly married.

Upon the one hand it was said that the Countess could not avow her marriage without the complete loss of her fortune, under the conditions of her late husband's will; and it was equally impossible that she should acknowledge her own child without the entire forfeiture of her reputation and self-esteem, however innocent she might really be. Upon the other hand, the Duke of Courthope was known to be deeply and even dangerously embarrassed. Lord Trecone and several of the Whig peers were talking loudly of an impeachment, hiding their party purposes (for that Duke was one of the pillars of the Tory party) under an affected zeal for the public good. Moreover, the Duke's creditors were extremely alarmed, because, in case of his death without direct heirs, they had no security whatever for their claims, nor was it possible they could ever obtain any. For the Duke alone, and without the consent of his next heir, was powerless over the entail; and there was something in the honest, unbending nature of Lord George Wyldwyl which would render it extremely hazardous to approach him with any scheme for raising money to pay off usurers at the expense of the permanent dignity and means of his family. If, however, a son could be born to the Duke and Duchess of

Courthope, the wisest course which the creditors could take would be to wait patiently till he grew up to man's estate, and could be induced to make himself responsible for their claims. Then, and then only, by means of rent charges, life assurances, and a new deed of settlement, they might be paid every fraction of their due. It was urged therefore, with some show of reason, that the Duke himself, pressed upon all sides, and especially being under heavy pecuniary obligations to Lady Pencarrow, as well as sole surviving trustee and executor of her husband, had been induced to father the late Lord Alfred's son in order to save the Pencarrow estates for the Countess, and that the Duchess had consented to give a colour to the proceeding, in order to save him from utter ruin and ignominy.

Everything is known in this world, there being no secret in existence which could survive a properly directed enquiry for forty-eight hours; and what was thought by well-informed persons was very nearly true. Lord George Wyldwyl declined to set any enquiry on foot; but a family deed was shortly afterwards drawn up by Mr. Mortmain, the hereditary solicitor of the Courthopes, providing that the Marquis of Revel should not marry, and that his line of the Dukes of Courthope should become extinct with him. By-and-by, however, it happened, as time passed on and Lord George had only one daughter to inherit his family honours, his wife having died early, that the conditions of the deed above mentioned were modified, lest the great dukedom of Courthope and Revel should die out altogether. It was then stipulated that the present Duke should marry forthwith, and that his son, should he have one, should be formally betrothed to Lord George's daughter. This arrangement was carried out, and the two young people, who were born within eighteen months of each other, were solemnly bound to love, honour, and cherish each other in the family interest before they could speak or hear for themselves.

Meantime Lord George had founded a new name and fortune for himself. He had consented to follow an Indian career at a time when very few men of his rank were disposed to serve at such a distance from home. He had therefore had the cream of everything in the East, and had risen with extraordinary rapidity. His pay and allowances for a long time had seldom been less than ten thousand a year, with free quarters, forage, and rations. He cumulated all sorts of high employments in his own person, and being a Lord, and therefore in a manner born into high place, nobody was jealous of him or tried to upset him. So he rose step by step, sending home prize money in plenty, and getting twelve per cent. for all his investments in India, till he did not know what he was worth. Mr. Mortmain, a very discreet old gentleman, having a huge admiration for this calm-hearted soldier who had disdained a dukedom, managed all his affairs for him, and managed them very prosperously. It was said at Lincoln's Inn and about the parlours of Lombard Street, where people know a great deal of the property of their neighbours, that Lord George Wyldwyl's heiress would be one of the greatest matches in

England, and that his Lordship's fortune could hardly fall short of three-quarters of a million sterling since his last great hauls of prize money.

The Indian General did not care much for money himself. He was a broad, bluff-looking man, with a lion-like head, who kept his guineas in a bag, out of which his friends and servants and all who came near him might help themselves. His aides-de-camp and secretaries, who all loved the open-hearted nobleman, were constantly occupied in protecting him from the importunities of beggars, and the moment his horse was seen in the street quite a flock of them seemed to start out of the earth to surround and accompany him whithersoever he went. He was enabled to save a city once because a Sepoy, who was quite willing to abolish the rest of the Christian race, could in no wise be persuaded to harm a hair of his head, and so warned the fine old soldier of his danger.

In his time, life in India was such a very different thing to what it has now become. The world was altogether a better place for a gentleman to live in. The higher officials, especially if they belonged to illustrious families, enjoyed kingly authority, respect, and immunities. Lord George was very happy there, very prosperous, and very useful. In England he would have been lost among the crowd of Toms and Harrys who are entitled to call themselves lords by courtesy. At most he would have been known as a good shot on the moors, or perhaps as an enterprising salmon fisher in Norway. He must have played the part of Jock, the laird's brother, living at free quarters, penniless, ignominious, and contented, till he was fit for nothing else, since he did not choose to assert his real rank at the cost of his kinsmen's honour. But at Calcutta he was a live authentic lord and something more; and very odd it was to see whole herds of middle class people copying the bluff nobleman's dress and bearing in the minutest particulars, so that one day, when he chanced to forget his cravat, all Calcutta adopted the fashion of going about bare-necked till he was seen again with a stock on.

Only one event had ever disturbed the even tenor of his life. More than forty years before the Indian Mutiny broke out, he had gone on furlough to England; and as soon as his arrival had been announced in the newspapers, he had received a strange incoherent letter from a place called Wakefield-in-the-Marsh, and it was signed "Margaret Wyldwyl." The writer said that she was the wife of Mr. Odo Wyldwyl; and he knew that there was but one person of that name, who was his brother, now the Duke of Courthope and Revel, who had so lately succeeded to the title, that his own patent of precedence as a duke's son was but just issued. If, therefore, the woman's statement meant anything, it would signify that she was Duchess of Courthope, and that there must be two duchesses of that name in existence. Moreover, Margaret Wyldwyl declared she had a daughter, and if this were true, and she could prove that she was his brother's wife, that daughter would be some day Countess of Winguid—a title which descended in the female line, with some very large estates in Scotland, where the marriage was alleged to have been

performed, and where it might indeed have happened without any publicity, or the slightest intelligence of the fact having reached England, considering that a Scotch marriage is merely a verbal contract between the parties concerned, which may be entered into at any time and place in the presence of witnesses.

Honest Lord George, therefore, was sorely puzzled. He had many doubts about his brother, and thought it quite possible that he might have gone farther than he intended before he had attained to such high fortunes. He saw him, interrogated him, and his answers were by no means calculated to set at rest suspicion. He prevaricated, cursed a little, and said he was very sorry he had ever been to Scotland, and "that it was all the fault of that canting old Majoribanks," with much to the same effect, which really meant nothing but that he was angry and alarmed. He was also suffering from some bruises about the face, which led up to the inference that he had been worsted in a stand-up fight with somebody.

Lord George, therefore, who was obstinate and pertinacious in his way, and quite incapable of countenancing any underhanded dealing, told his brother plainly that he would ferret out the truth, and that if there were two wives in the case, he ("honest George" as they called him) would stand by the first.

Down he went therefore in a yellow postchaise-and-four to Wakefield-in-the-Marsh, travelling all night to do so, and throwing his Indian outfit money about right royally. He arrived at the "Chequers" at about four o'clock on a summer's morning, making a great rumpus; and at five he had galloped away again, feeling convinced that there was nothing worth further notice in that business but what money could set right, bad as it was. The woman who called herself Margaret Wyldwyl still persisted in her story; she was pretty, though apparently far advanced in a consumption, and she had an infant daughter. That was all which she could make clear. She showed a box too which bore his brother's cypher and the family coronet; but there was nothing in it, though she maintained in a confused sort of way that there was, but that it had a secret fastening which she could not find. Her sister, however, or, as she seemed to say, her foster-sister, one Mrs. Giles, the wife of a publican who had been butler to old Dick Porteous, evidently did not believe the girl's story. She said there could be no marriage without a parson, as she herself knew, having been married only after having been called three times in church.

So thought honest George, leaving her a cheque for 50*l.*, which he found next day sent back to his hotel without a word. But his conscience was now at peace. He had done what he could to clear up a mystery which startled him; had cleared it up, as he thought, and there was an end of it, otherwise no considerations of expediency would have kept him quiet while a wrong was being done. With his own interests he had done as he pleased; he had given them up rather than shame and misery should light on his brother, but he certainly would not have compromised the interests of others. The whole affair had long since

passed from his memory, and General Lord Punjaub, Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's forces in India, little thought that his smart aide-de-camp, Cornet Brown, was the shapeless infant which his brother's widowed wife had held in her arms on the summer morning when she wept to him in vain at the village inn.

CHAPTER II.

PEACE.

By far the most precious gift which a young man can possess at the outset of his career in life is the faculty of attracting the good will of those who are placed in authority over him. It is a natural and not an acquired gift. Possibly it may depend upon causes too subtle for verbal analysis, words being as yet but clumsy and imperfect instruments. Like all natural endowments, however, it is of a better and higher quality than any of those which we can win by our own efforts—or prayers. It makes all the difference between success and failure in every profession. The men who rise rapidly, who attain distinction and honours at an age when they have a real value, are seldom clever; they are merely the men who are liked. Talent and even genius, though useful to the world, has never been well received by it; nor is good conduct by any means popular. All the valuable advice of friends, all the rules of moralists and philosophers, however scrupulously obeyed, never did much for any one. Probably it may be as well not to get into scrapes; but there is a notable difference in scrapes. If a young man who is liked gets into scrapes he will get out of them, or be got out of them, good humouredly, and thought still more kindly of for having exercised the Christian virtues of his friends perhaps. On the other hand, if a young man who is not liked gets into no scrapes, people will drag him into scrapes, shove him into scrapes, put him into other people's holes and wrongs, and leave him there.

William Brown was a favourite with everybody. The greatest curmudgeons in the regiment—the Major who had a chronic toothache and a short temper, Lieutenant Highlowes who had great ideas of the respect due to him, and a light purse; Captain Skrape who was in difficulties with the authorities—all troublesome folk in their way—were equally ready to say a kind word for him. It is likely enough that he owed at least some part of these good wishes to the fact of his being just a little stupid. He had no perception of the faults or shortcomings of other people, no sense of humour. He could see nothing funny in the Major's hair-dye, or Lieutenant Highlowes's tall-heeled boots; and when allusions were made to these standard topics of mess-room merriment, his face did not depart from its handsome gravity. When he spoke of other men behind their backs he did so in such a manner as to convey

the impression that he liked and esteemed them, or he said little. He never used flattering expressions, he never toadied anyone; but there were tones of deference and consideration in his voice, extremely simple and winning. Perhaps he was innately kind-hearted, and therefore innately polite.

So this young fellow had the best of all good things. He was to be seen at the Governor-General's balls, and in Lady Laura's pew at church when the Bishop preached. Even the right reverend prelate himself returned the Cornet's modest bow when they met with a half paternal smile; and Major-General Sir Ajax Bodger, a far more important personage than viceroy, lady, or bishop, deigned to give him a short grunt of recognition such as he seldom bestowed on anybody who had not at least one member of the House of Commons behind him.

Now among the innumerable ways in which it was possible a few years ago for well-disposed seniors to help a young man who pleased them up the ladder, was by sending him home with despatches announcing what everyone knew long before. The case is somewhat altered now. The Departments have grown sulky, or have given up this branch of business for the present; so that an officer coming home with despatches is very often left to pay his own travelling-expenses. But not long ago it was a generally understood thing in the army that the bearer of news of victory or a treaty of peace received a step in his profession, with a gratuity of five hundred pounds. Therefore, shortly after the Thanksgiving Day for the success of the British arms had been observed in England and in India; when peerages had been distributed to the victorious generals, and the storm of discontented pamphlets and angry disclaimers, of those who had got nothing or not enough, was beginning to subside, Lord Punjaub thought he might do something for his aide-de-camp by sending him home with a formal announcement of the cessation of hostilities.

"When can you start, Brown?" asked Lord Punjaub with his mouth full of tiffin, telling the good news to his aide-de-camp, that "he had managed the thing with Bodger," and he was to be sent home officially.

"Now," replied the young soldier.

"Quite right, Brown," said the General; "just like me. When Ellenborough, who was a dandy, sent me to Somnauth, he asked Sir Mungo Barker what I should take with me for outfit. 'Give him a tin pot, my Lord,' replied Sir Mungo, and I took one; nothing else, I assure you, Brown." And the General blew his nose loudly in a yellow pocket-handkerchief, to give emphasis to his discourse.

"Baggage is a bore, unless it's the enemy's," observed Cornet Brown, sitting down to table and helping himself to a slice of York ham which is a part of the usual cooling food we take in hot climates.

The General laughed till he was in danger of choking. "Enemies' baggage!—damn the boy, he'll suffocate me,—loot, eh, you mean?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied the youthful hero.

"Ah!" ejaculated the General, suddenly becoming grave as an owl, after drinking a large glass of Madeira enough to drown a weak man's thoughts. "I sha'n't be long after you, Brown. Violet is to take my command in July, which is only a month off, and the Indian army is to be amalgamated with the Queen's service. This is what I have worked up to all my life," added the General, rolling his eyes and tongue about solemnly; "for the Company's officers were in a false position as to rank, and I am glad that my task has ended. They will not be quite so well pleased with the liberalities of the War Office as they were with large-handed 'Old John'; but they must make the best of it, and console themselves with the thought that gain and glory do not go together, or I for one should not be so well off."

"There are exceptions to every rule," answered the aide-de-camp readily, and he smiled so as to leave no doubt that he really thought his General had earned fortune and fame together. There was not much wonderful about the fact that a young man was liked who could imply admiration so delicately without giving it utterance. Lord Punjaub, who was very simple minded, as most true soldiers are, felt the subtle tribute of the brave youth's honour, and colouring to the roots of his hair, began to bluster something about it being a hot day in the Hooghly; but the careless shaft at random sent had gone home to his breast, and he drew nearer to young Brown, taking him affectionately by the arm.

"You'll go and see my nephew at his place, Beaumanoir. It is a very fine place, and perhaps should have been mine if everyone had what belongs to them; but I am quite as well without it. I have made my own way in life, which is better than picking up other people's leavings."

The aide-de-camp nodded, as who should say, I should think so indeed; but he had the rare art of agreeing silently, an art most useful and pleasing when practised upon age and garrulity.

"Yes, Brown," spluttered Lord Punjaub, "you must see my nephew. He has all the vices, and is an accomplished nobleman." The General's lion-like face glowed with good humour, so that kind words bubbled out of him like water from a spring; and every sentence was flavoured with deep hidden thoughts, as water is charged with the properties of the soil through which it passes in its upward course to air, undergoing some such transformations as the voice when it rises into meaning.

"I have all your private letters with me, and shall never allow them to be out of my sight till they are delivered, you may be sure of that, my Lord," said Young Brown, showing an unfeigned sense of the importance of his trust. It was important, too, though only the loving scrawl of an old soldier to his only daughter. His pothooks could not have been very well formed, for his right hand had been maimed at Sobraon, but sweet girlish eyes would brighten when they saw them.

"Good fellow, good fellow!" blustered the General, patting his aide-de-camp on the shoulder as if he had been a horse. "I am sorry you won't see Amabel; she is with the Dowager Marchioness of Newcomen

in Ireland, but I shall present you as soon as I come home, and tell Missey to be on her best behaviour. Always call her Missey, Brown, you know, because she pulls my moustachios if she does not get her own way. You never saw such a tartar"—and "the dear old boy went off at score, being quite inexhaustible about that young person who was the pride and torment of his life," said General Brown, as he told this part of his story one day at Beaumanoir to the present writer, whereat his wife immediately pinched him and ordered her hero to speak more respectfully of her.

There had been another parting previously between Young Brown and the Marquis of Kinsgear, who had never answered to the call of bugle since the Nepaulese spear had struck him down. There had been consultations between the most eminent medical men of Calcutta about his state; but they could arrive at no other conclusion than that there was a lack of vitality in his constitution, and then it was remembered that his mother, the late Duchess of Courthope, had died early, and one of the Princes of Science declared that long life, like everything else worth naming which we either bring into this world or which takes us away from it, is hereditary. The wounds which he had received, though serious, were not such as would occasion any alarm in a healthy subject, being but flesh wounds, wherein none of the centres of life were concerned. Young Brown or Colonel Oakes, or even older men—Lord Punjaub or General Violet—would have shaken them off by the sheer force of nature. The blood of the Marquis, however, was more torpid than theirs. It was only when strongly roused, as he had been upon the field of battle, that he was capable of sustained physical effort; so the Prince of Science shook his head, and although he maintained that those new forms of life which we call death should never display themselves in a young human form, yet the feeling round the mess table of the 1st Lancers, as week after week left the Marquis's place still empty, was anything rather than hopeful.

Lord Kinsgear himself did not share these forebodings, for we are very seldom conscious of the nearest approaches of death. He thought that he should soon be well again when he got back to England, and could continue some experiments in electricity which interested him a great deal.

"Give my father the turquoises, Brown, that Meerza Ibraheem sent me from Persia, and tell him General Violet, who is a judge, says that these are of the purest colour from the old rock. I have been promised, also, the pick of the Begum's shawls when the 'loot' is sold, for Lady Overlaw; and Willie, try to like my father; I want you to make Beaumanoir your home."

"All right," returned his brother officer, briefly. "His Grace is such a swell that the best I can hope is that he will like *me*. No fear on the other side, you know. And now make haste and get well. That's the first thing to think about."

Housekeeping.

WHAT is the origin of evil? That is a question to which no satisfactory answer will be found until the philosopher of Chamisso's song has learnt how by twisting and turning to make his pigtail hang before him. It should be less hopeless, and yet experience seems to prove that it is almost equally difficult to find the explanation of certain particular evils which still afflict, as they have afflicted, society from the earliest ages. For how many centuries have people complained of feminine extravagance in dress? Did the complaints begin when our forefathers first substituted clothes for paint, or was it a familiar topic in the prehistoric ages of the kitchen middens? The lamentation over the sorrows of housekeepers has doubtless lasted for an equal time and we seem to be no nearer the end of it. Perhaps in the good old days of slavery the arrangement was regarded as tolerably satisfactory by one at least of the parties. When you could buy a man for a trifle, and knock his brains out or put him into a fishpond if he showed symptoms of insubordination, it was your own fault if things did not go pleasantly. A servile war might happen now and then, but in the intervals the masters should have had a good time of it. Those happy days, however, have departed; one man has been pretty nearly as good as another for some generations, but we are beginning to look back with fondness to the relics of old feudal customs. The complaint, indeed, was flourishing over two centuries ago, as we know from the familiar old song. His countrymen fondly remembered the queen's old courtier, who kept twenty old fellows in blue coats and badges, and were scandalised by his successor's French cooks and valets, who approximated to the modern type of flunkeydom. The attached old servant who valued the honour of the family above his own comfort, who would follow his master to death and to exile, and who in return was cherished and honoured in his old age, is rapidly sinking into the traditionary stage. He still appears occasionally in novels or domestic dramas; but we should ask for him in vain at the agency of a co-operative society, and we begin to regard him as a myth. Caleb Balderstone strikes us as an exaggeration even in a historical novel, and we incline to think that he would be a bore in real life. The maxim has obtained currency amongst masters that old servants are tyrants and nuisances; whilst servants are beginning to think that they are false to their order if they stay more than a year or two in one household. The old loyalty and the old spirit of protection is pretty nearly dead. Here and there it may possibly linger; at rare intervals we may still find an

ancient nurse who has presided over the cradles of a family and become a part of their domestic traditions. The sight of her may suggest to us how brutal must be the temper of mind which has converted "old woman" into a term of reproach, and may sometimes lead us to fancy that a similar relation may once have been beautiful in other cases. Of course that is all foolish sentiment. There is, at least, much to be said on the other side. The serving men who appear in our old literature are generally of a drunken and disreputable type, whom one would rather not have fixed upon one for life. They breathe the spirit of an excellent song in one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, with the characteristic climax :

But I would be in a good house,
And have a good master too ;
And I would eat and drink of the best,
And no work would I do.

Life seen from the kitchen had, perhaps, pretty much the same aspect then as now ; though the ambition involved less locomotion, and the horizon was generally confined within the parish bounds. Indolence, gluttony and selfishness, indeed, are of no particular age, though they find different modes of gratification. And, doubtless, if the tie was closer the service was rougher. It is recorded of those twenty good fellows, and apparently reckoned amongst their virtues that they never knew what belonged to coachman, footman, or pages. If more honest they were much clumsier than our friends Morgan and Littimer. In fact—and this we have lately been told with much emphasis is the true secret of the difference—society was then inadequately differentiated. Now differentiation is a word which very rightly carries with it a certain scientific prestige. It has been made popular by one of our first thinkers ; and, when we hear of it, we are fully sure that a reference to the inexorable laws of political economy will not be far off. Whatever little remonstrances we may be contemplating will be summarily knocked on the head by formulæ about supply and demand, the wages paid and the laws of population. Differentiation is part of evolution, and evolution is the great shibboleth of scientific reformers. *In hoc signo vinces !* Differentiate and all will be well. To put this magic formula into more commonplace language, we may say that the change which is taking place in the conditions of service is only part of a much wider change which is going on everywhere and inevitably, and to which we had therefore best submit without repining. In the good old days a rich man who wanted to send a message dispatched one of his blue-coated followers expressly for the purpose ; the poor man who wanted to send a message didn't. In modern times rich and poor alike have a share in a postman, who takes all the messages, thereby vastly economises time and trouble. On the old plan, the private messenger was, perhaps, kicking his heels in idleness for nine days out of ten, and when he took one letter he might as well have been taking a hundred. On the new plan, the public official is kept

steadily at work and supplies a thousand wants which were previously left unsatisfied. So far we are much better off; and it would be irrelevant to say that the old servant had a sense of loyalty and personal affection, whereas the postman takes no more interest in his employers than in the lamp-posts, except for a spasmodic outburst of sentiment about Christmas time. Now, it is suggested, let us carry out the same principle in all matters of household arrangement. As one man supplies a district with its letters, let another black all its boots, a third brush all its coats, and a fourth cook all its dinners. Then everything will be comfortable, and all difficulties about service be finally solved. This is called co-operative housekeeping, and co-operation is rapidly becoming a kind of sacred name with all reformers. That it has done much good is undeniable, though I will confess that I for one am becoming just a little bored when I read the hundred and first description of the Rochdale Pioneers; and even that I am not quite so certain as might be wished that those most deserving persons have succeeded in preaching the gospel which is to save us in this nineteenth century.

That the process thus described is continuing, is likely to continue, and, moreover, that it may be applied to housekeeping with great advantage, I am by no means inclined to deny. Whether it is necessarily a matter for rejoicing, or a process to be pushed on as fast as possible, appears to be a little more doubtful. The advantages, indeed, which such a system holds out are unequivocal. No reasonable person will deny that if we seriously set about the task of organizing domestic service on rational principles a vast amount of trouble might be saved. At first sight, it may be, there is something rather distressing about the prospect of possessing only the tenth part of a cook, and waiting to have your coat brushed till the servant who was now employed at No. 1 in the street should work through all the intermediate numbers to 99. But when we have once arranged all the wheels of the machinery with anything like that expenditure of ingenuity which is applied in a cotton manufactory the apparent inconveniences will disappear. It is easy to suggest any number of expedients. A great amount of labour goes in an English house to the duty and disagreeable task of preparing the fires, which squander so rapidly our remaining stock of coal. In an American house, where saving of labour has become a pressing necessity, the trouble is minimised by a simple arrangement. A single furnace is lighted, and the rooms are warmed by hot air, which can be admitted or excluded at pleasure. In England we cling to the belief that our own plan, which means exposure to any number of cold draughts playing about our backs as we toast our toes, and allows us to move through all climates between our kitchens and our garrets, is healthier and more comfortable. However that may be, it is clearly more laborious. A similar principle might be carried out in almost every department of domestic life. We need not have furniture specially adapted to collect layers of London dust; every separate family need not cook its own chop in its own kitchen; and, in short, we

might in time arrive at a consummation in which the chief drudgery of a household should be a pleasant occupation for a gentleman wishing to get an appetite for breakfast, and meals should come from a food manufactory on the simple summons of a bell. In a moderate household it may now take half-a-dozen people to do the menial duties necessary for a single couple; in the ideal household of the future the proportions might be reversed, or perhaps one servant might be enough for three families. The figures may be altered, according to the sanguine disposition of the inventor; but, assuming all this to be done to any conceivable degree of perfection, there still remains a question or two. Co-operative house-keeping, though without all the refinements suggested, is by no means a novelty. It is carried out to some extent wherever there is an inn. The advice comes, in short, to this, that the family of the future is to live in a gigantic hotel, with a great, and as yet unimaginable, number of labour-saving appliances. Possibly we kick a little at the prospect. We remember old sayings about the Englishman's love of his own home, and certain taunts which we used to throw out at our unfortunate American cousins for the demoralization supposed to flow from their hotel life. Perhaps it would have been more reasonable to wonder that in a country where a servant is synonymous with a newly imported Irish girl, and housekeeping is consequently a hardship calculated to wear out nerves of whipcord, delicate women should ever submit to the worries and toil which it involves. And when we reflect that as labour diffuses itself more equally we are likely to fall into the same condition, we may admit that hotel life may come to be the least of two evils. Let us rather congregate in caravansaries than attempt to carry on the struggle in detail against the irrepressible menial. Let us fairly shake the yoke off our necks, and let each party go its way. The desire to keep up a separate establishment for each family is merely an antiquated superstition. The wish to exercise a certain influence over our servants is a relic from the old protective system. Henceforth the man who blacks our boots for us shall stand in no closer connection to us than the man who turns on the gas. We will buy our dinners as we buy our coats, and have no more pretence to keep a cook upon the premises than a tailor. Life will be infinitely easier without all this cumbrous state which it is at present incumbent upon everybody to support. Why should every private gentleman maintain a miniature court, with miniature chamberlains, and masters of the horse, and ladies in waiting, and have elaborate rules of etiquette devised for the maintenance of pomp rather than for the supply of his wants? Are we not inexpressibly snobbish and silly, with all the pretentious apparatus of daily life which astonishes foreigners, and forces Englishmen to make themselves more elaborately uncomfortable with a greater expenditure of money than any other civilized race? If, in order to accomplish this desirable object, it is necessary to break all the ties which at present connect masters and servants, is not the reward worth the sacrifice? As it is, the connection has become all but unprofitable to either party. The servant is rapidly becoming

ashamed of the very name, and the master has ceased to feel any personal interest in his dependants. We live in the house with our fellow-creatures in plush, and scarcely know their names; we should often pass in the street without recognition the very woman who has laid our fires for months; they and we are in bodily contact, but live in two different worlds of thought and feeling; we read different newspapers, go to different churches, and never have any personal relation, except of a pecuniary kind, from one year's end to another. To attempt to restore the old state of things is to try to have serfdom again without its costs, and, in short, to resuscitate the dead. Why not snap off chains which are now galling because purely mechanical, and reposing upon no genuine sentiment on either side? Let us pack up our portmanteaus, go to the nearest hotel, and there lead simple and sensible lives, without the vexations and weariness of flesh which result from a mutually false position.

So far as this appeal rests upon a genuine wish for greater simplicity of life, it deserves all respect. But it is at this point that a little difficulty begins to intrude. Are we so clear that our lives would be simpler and nobler when passed in hotels, or, if you will, in co-operative clubs? We should be set free from a certain number of responsibilities and bothers. Might not our first step be possibly to plunge into others? Why is English life such a complicated and cumbrous business? Is it not that, for some reason or other, we are desperately inclined to be extravagant, and that the richer we grow the more money we are disposed to spend? The increased efficiency of labour has not resulted in our having more time to devote to rational purposes and refined enjoyments; but, at least as much in our devising new methods of throwing away money senselessly. Our extravagance keeps pace with our saving, and society has therefore grown more troublesome as it has grown more wealthy. Such at least is the doctrine which is frequently preached for the benefit of the poorer classes. What is the use, say people who pay wages, of doubling the wages of an artizan? The only practical result is, that he spends the increment upon gin. How far that imputation is true it is not for an outsider to say. I should hope that part of it at least may be set down to a very natural desire for discovering a good reason for resisting awkward demands. But, whatever its truth, it might be retorted with some plausibility upon the classes who make it most frequently.

When the alderman became rich, Pope may tell us what was the result in his time. Sir Peter had been content with a pudding on Sundays:—

Live, like yourself, was now my lady's word,
And lo! two puddings smoked upon the board.

Human nature has not radically changed in a century and a half; and there is a good deal of it in most classes of society. An increased command of wealth does not of necessity bring with it an increased skill in its employment. A man who has been so debased by extreme poverty

that he has only cultivated his animal appetites, inevitably regards higher wages merely as a means of gratifying them more fully. A gentleman whose income is raised from one to three thousand a year, cannot make precisely the same error; he cannot, that is, spend the whole entire two thousand exclusively upon his stomach; but he may easily discover means of getting rid of it not much more elevating. If we were content to live upon the same scale as our forefathers, and to use all our surplus means for public-spirited purposes, or for refined pleasures, the difference between our civilisation and theirs would be much more marked than it is. Unluckily it is much plainer that a modern gentleman has more luxuries than his father than that he leads on the whole a nobler and more intellectual life. Doubtless there is an improvement in very many respects. We are not so coarse in our tastes or so brutal in our manners as the leaders of the old-fashioned school; but perhaps we devote nearly as large a proportion of our energies to mere frivolities which do little good to ourselves or to anybody else. And therefore it is less necessary to teach people how to grow rich—a lesson which they are perfectly well disposed to learn for themselves—than to teach them how to use their wealth when they have got it. In the scientific language which imposes upon us so much, integration is as essential a part of evolution as differentiation. In simpler words, the improvement of the social machinery must be followed by an adaptation of our old instincts to our new position, or the total result will be decay instead of development.

This question of domestic service is, as we are truly told, part of a wider change. We are accustomed to lament over the widening gap between different classes. If in old days a bit of work was required in your house, you went to the village carpenter, whom you had known from infancy, who had a character to lose, and who probably stood in more or less of a friendly relation towards you. Between you and him there was a mutual confidence which was some guarantee for his doing his work honestly. Now you go to a great employer of labour to whom you represent an infinitesimal unit in the general public. He sends for a man who is too independent to care much for his employer and who cares still less for you. He does the work or scamps it according to circumstances, and the chances are that neither of you will ever see the other's face again. You gravely complain that the man doesn't take a pride in his work and take occasion to lament the progress of socialism, communism, and other diabolical inventions of modern revolutionists. The political economist laughs at you, and tells you that it is all owing to the inevitable progress of differentiation. You might as well complain of the rising of the tide or find fault with the procession of the equinoxes. Classes have drifted, and will drift, further apart as certainly as society makes progress, and all lamentations over the process are simply so much empty sentimentalism. The tendency is for all classes to become independent of each other, and for society to resolve itself into a chaos of disconnected units. If this were, in fact, the last word to be said upon the subject, it

must be admitted that the prospect would not be encouraging. The old means of preserving sympathy between classes are to be destroyed and nothing is to take their place: the world is not approaching a millennium but drifting into utter anarchy. The political economist may convince us that time cannot be made to run backwards, but it will be at the price of demonstrating that going forwards means moral deterioration. Some very excellent people pretty nearly accept that conclusion. As they watch the disappearance of the old ties, and fail to see any adequate substitute provided for them, they turn pessimists and indulge in sweeping denunciations of all those changes which are the texts of popular orators about progress. Now, pessimism is a very uncomfortable frame of mind, if a too complacent optimism is apt to be an irritating one. To avoid it, however, we must believe that in some way or other the benevolence, the loyalty, and the sympathy which displayed themselves under the old system will not be destroyed, but find new and, it may be hoped, more effective channels for uniting themselves under the new. Differentiation, or division of labour, undoubtedly brings grave evils with it, unless some compensation be discovered; and it is not likely to be discovered soon if everybody who points out the evils is denounced as a foolish Utopian or a hopelessly retrograde thinker. It is plain, for example, that a man who passes his whole life in putting heads upon pins is so far in an inferior position to his forefather who could go through all the processes necessary for making a complete pin, and still more inferior to the earlier ancestor who was capable of providing for all the wants of a simple existence. A great many more pins are made, as Adam Smith very properly explained under present arrangements; but that is a very small comfort if each of the pin-makers is to be a mere infinitesimal wheel in a vast machinery instead of a complete and independent human being. A society composed of a million people, each of whom is a mere fraction of humanity, is a less cheerful object of contemplation than a society of a thousand, where each unit has a full chance of developing his faculties to the uttermost. The true solution can only be realised when the promoter shares in the general results of the co-operation and can, by a moderate amount of labour, win the capacity for leading a rational and elevating life during the remainder of his time. At the other parts of the scale we have everywhere a similar result. The progress of scientific knowledge, for example, would give small cause for congratulation if it merely implied so vast an accumulation of knowledge that each thinker could only have an infinitesimal share of it to himself. The modern specialist, who is familiar with the structure of a particular insect, is a very inferior man to the old philosopher who took all knowledge for his province, even though all the knowledge of that day was comparably less than all the knowledge of this. The compensation is to be found in the fact that science has been so far organised that each thinker may be acquainted with its general truths as well as follow out some particular branch of enquiry to its furthest ramifications. The whole field has been mapped out, whilst plans on a larger scale have been

made of particular portions ; and were that not the case the accumulation of knowledge would crush the intellect without enlarging it.

It is, however, time to come back to the servants, from whom we have been digressing pretty freely. The division between masters and servants is to extend and widen, like the division between labourers and capitalists, or between rich and poor generally. We are no longer to flatter ourselves with the sense that we are patrons, or that our servants are dependants. We are not to extend protection to them, or to receive loyalty from them. The man who comes to clean our boots is not to enter into any formal or permanent relation towards us, but is simply to supply bootcleaning as the shopkeeper supplies boots. We are to drift together for the moment, and then to drift apart, without any obligation received or contracted on either side. Let us make up our minds to it, and solace ourselves as well as we can in the bosom of our families, unless the family too is to become a matter of temporary arrangement, and all human organizations to be mere accidental aggregations of independent units, combining or separating according to the interests of the moment. If that is to be, we must submit to it. Still, to take this process by itself, and to assert that because it is taking place it is perfectly right, and includes all that we can possibly desire, is to preach mere fatalism. The habit of expecting the millennium to begin every moment, or of professing to invent an impromptu Utopia is doubtless a mischievous one, and can only lead to disappointment. It is idle to regret what we cannot expect to alter ; but it is also true that there is not much use in being reasonable creatures at all, unless we can observe the bad as well as the good symptoms of the changes that are coming, and seek to alleviate them by any means in our power. And therefore admitting that the relation between master and servant is being radically transformed, the real object of reformers should be to take care how the transformation may sweep away as little as possible of what is really good in the old relation. We should not say, "As we are to part, let us part as quickly as possible," but, "As we are to part, let us try to part in the most friendly manner." Moreover, the parting is not likely to take place in this generation or the next. In a good many years to come there will be domestic servants in many thousands of families, and it is therefore worth while to enquire how the relation may be turned to the best account before the inevitable separation comes. Simply to say that it is inevitable helps us very little, and throws no light upon the question of the feelings which will be involved in the process. The whole art of politics consists in substituting a peaceful reform for a violent revolution, and the same problem is usually proposed to the humbler reformers of our domestic institutions. To attempt to lay down the definite means by which this should be effected, lies beyond the province of an outsider, as, indeed, it is probably beyond the skill of any of our social philosophers. The object of this paper is not to propose a solution of the problem, but to show what is its real nature ; or, rather, to urge that to talk about the inevitable tendency to

differentiation and the like is rather to shirk our responsibilities than to show how we can most effectually meet them.

One or two remarks, however, may possibly be suggested of a very general nature. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that we have entered the distant Utopia. If we could realize its probable character a little more distinctly, we might see a little better how to prepare ourselves for its advent. Imagine, then, that we have all taken to living in large hotels organized in the most admirable fashion. The machinery of life will work without half its present creaking and waste of useful force. Ladies, in particular, will not be condemned to spend whole mornings in conversation with their cooks, or in looking over the petty details of housekeeping. A great deal of energy will thus be set free, which at present is employed to no adequate purpose. To what other purposes will it then be applied? The answer suggested is that ladies will then have the professions thrown open to them, and will be lawyers, physicians, and professors. Assuming that this will take place, the difficulty still remains. Unless crime and disease increase in the same proportion, which, it is to be hoped, will not be one of the results of our Utopia; the amount of employment for lawyers and physicians will remain what it was; and for every feminine labourer a masculine will be displaced. Neither, it is to be hoped, need we accept the conclusion that all the freed energy will be devoted to purely selfish purposes. If so, we should be merely substituting two puddings for one; and life, though simplified in one direction, would become more cumbrous in others. Charity in its present form is of course to be discouraged; for political comments have satisfactorily proved that alms-giving is nothing but an indirect mode of patronising public houses. Perhaps, therefore, it may be hoped that in some form or other one peculiarity of Utopia will be that in some shape or other the rich and cultivated will employ some part of their spare energies for the benefit of the public, and even of their poorer neighbours. Poverty, indeed, in its present sense will in due time be abolished; because in Utopia nobody will be naked or hungry, or if any people are, they will be treated as criminals, and sentenced to starvation. The claim too, of neighbourhood will lose its force, inasmuch as the relationship between different persons will be reduced to mere commercial transactions. We must not, however, look quite so far ahead; but may assume that, at least in the earlier ages of Utopia, there will be some people poorer and more ignorant than others, and that propinquity will occasionally develop a more or less friendly feeling. If so, the benevolent instincts need not be abolished, and the problem will be how to unite a certain amount of kindly relations with an absence of any claims to patronage on one side, or any admission of dependence upon the other. It is possible for gratitude to exist amongst friends without infringing upon the strictest equality, and if we gave in to the wildest pretensions ever put forward by one of the servant girls caricatured in *Punch*, we might still be on good terms without exciting unpleasant susceptibilities. There is a certain ceremony which

we have all witnessed without, it is feared, always receiving an impression of due solemnity. When the servants fall in to family prayers in solemn procession, one may sometimes fear that the butler's thoughts are running more upon his plate than upon the passage of Scripture, and that the cook is calculating the time in which the cutlets will be spoilt. But, without dwelling upon discordant details, the performance suggests that people of different status may meet for certain purposes upon terms which are not degrading to either, and which may well be extremely improving to both. Unluckily, it is only for a few minutes that we meet upon the common ground; and as soon as we cease to be miserable sinners, we spring up with remarkable rapidity into the stiff, if not hostile, attitude of masters and servants. One set goes to church and the other to the meeting-house, and the momentary union of Christian sentiment appears to be little better than a hollow truce between mutual antipathies. In Utopia, however, all these jarring sentiments will be remedied; for by that time we shall all have found out the truth, and be converted to—whatever is the reader's form of opinion. The higher ranks will be separated from the lower by having received a wider culture, but there will not be a total breach of sympathy. At present they are kept apart by a gulph like that which intervenes between foreigners who talk different languages; then the distinction will be analogous only to that which divides a learner from a master. The superior will be able to say without due presumption: I have had greater advantages than you, and am therefore able to give you good advice or useful instruction or to help you to rational modes of enjoyment without insisting upon obedience to any arbitrary authority. The inferior will cheerfully recognise the fact, and be glad to receive friendly assistance, and pay for it by honourable service. Merely to indicate such a relation in the vaguest way is to prove that we are indeed thinking of Utopia, and not of any social condition hitherto realized amongst men. But the fact that some such condition is strictly speaking conceivable if indefinitely distant, is enough to prove that independence need not necessarily mean hostility or even indifference. No living person, it is true, can look forward to a day when a master will be to a servant what an elder brother is to a younger, or a respected tutor to his pupil. We have some difficulty in imagining a state of things in which a rich man can take an interest in his poorer neighbours without dictating or bullying, or being flattered to his face and behind his back.

But difficult as it may be to imagine such a state of things, and hopeless as it may be to go any distance towards realising it, that is no reason why we should not endeavour to make what trifling approximation is possible. And, therefore, as it seems to me, the real object of reformers should not be to show that classes are drifting further apart, and encourage us to rejoice over the material advantages which may result, but rather to tell us by what means mutual good feeling may still be cultivated under changed circumstances, and a friendliness, degrading to nobody, be substituted for the old relations of patronage and respect. Surely, with

all the desire of a large class of charitable persons to be "doing good," in some sense of that very wide phase, they might possibly find some outlet for their energies in good offices towards the persons who are drifted into a temporary relation to them, in the shifting sense of modern society. We are all very anxious to take part in grand schemes of charity which make a great deal of noise and do a great deal of mischief. Some expenditure of ingenuity in discovering how we might do good to people who live in the same house with us, in spite of all the jealousies and susceptibilities that have been lately aroused or inherited from former times, would not be altogether thrown away. It is, doubtless, very picturesque to go out into the highways and hedges and give money to paupers who will still touch their hats and make curtsies for money ; but it would also be of some practical advantage to discover means of knowing something of a human relation to the people who are so much to us and yet so strangely separated from our sympathies. But, perhaps, such a suggestion verges upon the Utopian.

The Swallows.

Ah! swallows, is it so?

Did loving lingering summer, whose slow pace
 Tarried among late blossoms, loth to go,
 Gather the darkening cloud-wraps round her face
 And weep herself away in last week's rain?
 Can no new sunlight waken her again?

"Yes," one pale rose ablow
 Has answered from the trellised lane;
 The flickering swallows answer "No."

From out the dim grey sky
 The arrowy swarm breaks forth and specks the air,
 While, one by one, birds wheel and float and fly,
 And now are gone, then suddenly are there;
 Till lo the heavens are empty of them all.
 Oh fly, fly south, from leaves that fade and fall,
 From shivering flowers that die;
 Free swallows, fly from winter's thrall,
 Ye who can give the gloom goodbye.

But what for us who stay
 To hear the winds and watch the boughs grow black,
 And in the soddened mornings, day by day,
 Count what lost sweets bestrew the nightly track
 Of frost-foot winter trampling towards his throne?
 Swallows, who have the sunlight for your own,
 Fly on your sunward way;
 For you has January buds new-blown,
 For us the snows and gloom and grey.

On, on, beyond our reach,
 Swallows, with but your longing for a guide:
 Let the hills rise, let the waves tear the beach,
 Ye will not balk your course nor turn aside,
 But find the palms and twitter in the sun.
 And well for them whose eager wings have won
 The longed-for goal of light;
 But what of them in twilights dun
 Who long but have no wings for flight?

AUGUSTA WEBSTER.

Sir Edwin Landseer.

WHEN he was a very little boy, Edwin Landseer used to ask his mother to set him a copy to draw from, and then—so his sisters have told me—complain that she always drew one of two things, either a shoe or a currant pudding, of both of which he was quite tired. No wonder that this was insufficient food for the eager young spirit for whose genius in after life two kingdoms were not too wide a range. The boy, when he was a little older, and when his bent seemed more clearly determined, went to his father and asked him for teaching. The father was a wise man and told his son that he could not himself teach him to be a painter, that Nature was the only school, Observation the true and only teacher. He told little Edwin to use his own powers; to think about all the things he saw; to copy everything: and then he turned the boy out with his brothers—they were all three much of an age—to draw the world as it then existed upon Hampstead Heath. There seem to have been then, as now, little donkeys upon the common, old horses grazing the turf and gorse, and chickens and children at play, though I fear that now, alas! no little curly-headed boy is there storing up treasures for the use of a whole generation to come.

Day after day the children used to spend upon the Heath in the fresh air, at their sports and their flights, but learning meanwhile their early lesson. Their elder sister used to go with them, a young mentor to keep these frolicsome spirits within bounds. One can imagine the little party, buoyant, active, in the full delightful spring of early youth. Perhaps youth is a special attribute belonging to artistic natures, to those whom the gods have favoured, and the old fanciful mythology is not all a fable. . . . Some boys are never young. When I last saw Sir Edwin Landseer, something of this indescribable youthful brightness still seemed to be with him, although the cloud which dimmed his later years had already partially fallen. But the cruel cloud is more than half a century distant at the time of which I am writing, and, thanks be to Heaven, the whole flood of life, and work, and achievement lies between.

Little Edwin painted a picture in these very early days, which was afterwards sold. It was called the "Mischief-makers:" a mischievous boy had tied a log of wood to the tail of a mischievous donkey. The little donkey's head in the South Kensington Museum may have been drawn upon Hampstead Heath—a careful black-lead donkey, that cropped the turf and looked up one day, some sixty years ago, with a puzzled face.

Perhaps it was wondering at the size of the artist standing opposite, with his little sympathetic hand at work. The drawing is marked "E. Landseer, five years old." This little donkey, of the line of Balaam's ass, had already found out the secret and knew how to speak in his own language to the youthful prophet. Our little prophet needs no warning on his journey; he is not about to barter his sacred gift, and from Hampstead Heath, and from many a wider moor, he will honestly give his blessing to the tribes as they come up. The tribe of the poor; the tribe of the hardworking rich; the tribe of Manchester; the tribe of Belgravia. Which is there among them that has not been the better for it? There are other sketches in the frame at the Kensington Museum; a policeman pointed them out to me. "*He* knew Sir Edwin's pictures well, and his sketches, too; why, he was only six year old when he draw that dog," said the policeman, kindly. The dog is a pointer curling its tail; there is the household cat, too, with broad face and feline eyes. There is a more elaborate sketch done at the age of fifteen, and probably representing the same pointer grown into an ancient model now, and promoted from black-lead to water-colour. The young painter himself must have been near starting in life by this time: born with his fairy gift, the time was come to reveal it.

Little Edwin was eight years old when he first engraved a plate of etchings; asses' heads, sheep, donkeys were all there, and then came a second plate for lions and tigers. He was always drawing animals. When he was thirteen he exhibited the portrait of a pointer and puppy, and also the portrait of Mr. Simpson's mule, "by Master E. Landseer," as mentioned in the catalogue. In this year his father took him to Haydon the painter, for there is a notice in Haydon's "Diary":—

"In 1815 Mr. Landseer, the engraver, had brought me his sons, and said: 'When do you intend to let your beard grow and take pupils?' I said, 'If my instructions are useful or valuable, now.' 'Will you let my boys come?' I said, 'Certainly.' Charles and Thomas, it was immediately arranged, should come every Monday morning, when I was to give them work for the week. Edwin took my dissections of the lion, and I advised him to dissect animals as the only mode of acquiring a knowledge of their construction.

"This very incident generated in me the desire to form a school, and as the Landseers made rapid progress, I resolved to communicate my system to others."

In 1817 Landseer exhibited a picture of "Brutus," the family friend. After "Brutus" comes a picture called "Fighting Dogs getting Wind," which was his first real success. It was, I believe, bought by that friendly umpire of art, Sir George Beaumont. In 1818 Wilkie writes approvingly to Haydon, saying: "Geddes has a good head, Etty a clever piece, and young Landseer's jackasses are also good." Most of these facts I have read in a helpful little biography in the South Kensington Museum, which contains a list of Sir Edwin's early works. The list is a marvel

of length and industry. There are many etchings mentioned, and among them "Recollections of Sir Walter and Lady Scott." When Sir Edwin gave up etching, it was Thomas Landseer who engraved his pictures. And here I cannot help adding that, looking over the etchings of that early time, and of later date, my admiration has not been alone for Sir Edwin, but for his brother's work as well.

Haydon's advice about depicting lions seems to have stood the young student in good stead. There is mention made of roaring and prowling lions, of a lion disturbed at his meal, on a canvas six feet by eight. Haydon, as we know, was for extremes of canvas and other things. I heard a philosopher describe him only yesterday as "a strange medley of genius and vanity, of high intention and money operations—a man who did good work in his time, and who died for jealousy of Tom Thumb." Leslie, in his autobiography, has his appreciative word for Haydon: "I was captivated with Haydon's art," he writes, "which was then certainly at its best, and tried, but with no success, to imitate the richness of his colour and impasto . . . At a much later period I was struck with his resemblance to Charles Lamb's 'Ralph Bigod, Esq.,' that noble type of the great race of men—'the men who borrow.' I even thought, before Lamb declared Fenwick to be the prototype of Bigod, that Haydon was the man, and I am not sure that Lamb did not think of him as well as of Fenwick. All the traits were Haydon's. Bigod had an *undeniable* way with him. He had a cheerful, open exterior, a quick, jovial eye, a bald forehead, just touched with grey, *cana fides*. He anticipated no excuse, and found none. When I think of this man—his fiery glow of heart, his swell of feeling—how magnificent, how *ideal* he was, how great at the midnight hour, and when I compare him with the companions with whom I have associated since, I grudge the saving of a few idle ducats, and think that I am fallen into the society of *lenders* and *little men*."

There is a sketch in Mr. Symonds's book about Greek poets which also recalls Haydon, and gives us a classical image of him in brazen sandals and purple draperies.

In 1822 Landseer received a premium from the British Institution for a picture called "The Larder Invaded." In 1824 he paints the celebrated "Catspaw: the monkey's device for eating hot chestnuts." It was sold for 100*l.*, and would fetch near 3,000*l.* now. Then he is made A.R.A.; and in 1826 the scene changes from lions' dens and monkeys' pranks to the well-loved moors and lakes—to the misty, fresh, silent life of the mountain that he has brought into all our homes.

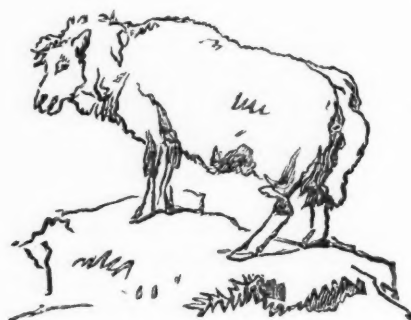
Some of his earliest paintings are illustrations out of Walter Scott's romances. He loved Scott from the beginning to the very end of his life, and kept some of his books and some of Shakespeare's plays by his bedside, to read when he could not sleep. One of his very first oil pictures, however, was not out of a book: it was the portrait of his sister as a little baby girl, toddling about in a big bonnet.

There is a pretty little paragraph in Leslie's autobiography, about

Friday 20th

My dear Mr. Mackenzie

Old Rams look killed sometimes,
they usually innocent that
 are I suppose?



Yours ever —

H. for all to know that
 Chap. off: Sheep generally want
 will do my best I illustrate
 page for the King



Landseer after he became a student at the Royal Academy. "Edwin Landseer," he says, "who entered the Academy very early, was a pretty little curly-headed boy, and he attracted Fuseli's attention by his talents and gentle manners. Fuseli would look round for him and say, 'Where is my little *dog-boy*.'"

The few words tell their story, and at the same time reveal the kind heart of the writer, who all his life seems to have admired and loved his younger companion, of whom there is frequent mention in his books.

"Art may be learnt, but can't be taught," says Leslie, as the elder Landseer had said. "Under Fuseli's wise neglect Wilkie, Mulready, Etty, Landseer, and Haydon distinguished themselves, and were the better for not being made all alike by teaching, if indeed that could have been done."

Fuseli's system seems to have been to come in with a book in his hand and to sit reading nearly the whole time he remained with the students; and here I cannot help saying that, notwithstanding his gentle vindication, Leslie himself followed a very different method. It is true that when he taught young painters he used to say very little, but "he would take the brushes and the pallet himself and show them a great deal," says his son George.

It is now about fifty years since the little *dog-boy* (who was only some nineteen years old) set up in life for himself, hired a tiny little cottage with a studio in St. John's Wood. The district even now is silent and unenclosed in many places. In those days it must have been almost a country place. A garden paling divided the painter and his young household from friendly neighbours; and Mrs. Mackenzie, his sister and house-keeper in those youthful days, has told us of pleasant early times and neighbourly meetings before the great eddying wave of life and popularity had reached the quiet place; while the young man works and toils at his art, and faces the early difficulties and anxieties that oppress him, and that even his fairy gift cannot altogether avert.

In one of the notices upon his pictures it is said that as a boy and a youth he haunted shows of wild beasts with his sketch-book, and the matches of rat-killing by terriers. Cannot one picture the scene, the cruel sport; the crowd looking on, stupid or vulgarly excited, and there, among coarse and heavy glances and dull scowling looks, shines the bright young face, not seeing the things that the dull eyes are watching, but discerning the something beyond—the world within the world—that life within common life that genius makes clear to us?

What are the old legends worth if this is not what they mean? Our Sir Orpheus plays, and men and animals are brought into his charmed circle. Qualities delicate, indescribable, sympathies between nature and human nature are revealed.

There is a description in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Transformation of Donatello and the animals*. The young count calls in the forest, filling the air with a modulated breath; the poet describes the broad dialect—broad as the sympathies of nature—in which the human brother speaks to the inarticulate brotherhood that prowl the woods or soar upon the wing; intelligible to such extent as to win their confidence; and then comes the description of their answer:—

"Donatello paused two or three times and seemed to listen; then, recommencing, he poured his spirit and life more earnestly into the strain; and, finally—or else the sculptor's hope and imagination deceived him—soft treads were audible upon the fallen leaves. There was a rustling

among the shrubbery, a whirr of wings, moreover, that hovered in the air. It may have been all an illusion; but Kenyon fancied that he could distinguish the stealthy, cat-like movement of some small forest citizen; that he could even see a doubtful shadow if not really its substance. But all at once, whatever might be the reason, there ensued a hurried rush and scamper of little feet."

Some such art as Donatello's must have belonged to our Sir Edwin.

There is a world to which some favoured spirits belong by natural right; others, more distant from its simple inspiration, want the interpreter who is to tell them the meaning of those sudden brown lights and wistful glances; those pricking ears and tails a-quiver; those black confiding noses, humorous and simple, snuffing and sniffing the heathery breezes. It is he who has summoned those little feet for us, coming, as in Donatello's charm, suddenly scampering down the mountain pass; we seem to hear the gentle flurry; or again, we are on the mountain itself; the figures lie motionless wrapped in their plaids, the stag is unconscious and quietly grazing, in branching dignity; it is the little doe, watchful, with sweet, up-pricked head, who is turning to give the alarm; or again it may be a tranquil mist through which the light forms are passing; or a stag wounded and trailing across the sunset waters to die.

Who does not know the picture called "Suspense": the noble hound watching at his master's closed door? The painter has painted a whole heart, tender reproach, silence, steady trust, anxious patience. The theme is utterly pathetic, and tells its story straight to the bystander; the door is closed fast and will never open; the frayed feather from the master's plume has fallen to the ground. He must have been carried by, for there is a drop of blood upon the feather and another on the floor beyond, and the helpless tender friend has been shut out. I can hardly imagine any picture more tranquil, more pathetic. Who that has ever been shut out, but will understand the pang?

And then, again, what home-like glimpses do we owe to Landseer—he has painted warmth, content, and fidelity. Look at that fireside party; the tender contentment of the colley, whose faithful nose is guarding the old shepherd's slippers; or the highland breakfast scene, with its gentle, almost maternal, humours; the baby, the proud mother, the little fat puppies that are a pleasure to behold. In the well-known painting of the "Shepherd's Last Mourner," the pathos consists as much in that which is not as in that which is there. The dog with silent care rests his head upon the lonely coffin. He does not understand very much about it all: life he can understand, not death. His feeling is more touching in its incompleteness than if he could grasp anything beyond the present strange wistful moment. Is there aspiration in such a picture? There is natural religion most certainly, as there must be in all true nature. No saint depicted in agony, no painted miracle, could give a more vivid realisation of simple natural feeling, of the mysterious love and fidelity which is in life, and which the very dog can understand, as he silently watches by his old master's coffin.

As I write a friend is saying that some people complain, and not without justice, that Landseer, in some instances, makes his animals almost too human. The picture of Uncle Tom and his wife in chains has been instanced. In the "Triumph of Comus" the blending of animal and human nature is almost painful to look at, and it is a relief to turn from its nightmare-like vividness to those peaceful cliffs hanging on the wall beyond, where the fresh daylight comes over the crisping waters, where the children are at play and the sheep grazing at the cannon mouth.

One can recognize in some of the earlier paintings of Sir Edwin the impression of the mental companionship of those who influenced the school of art at the beginning of this century. Regarding this, the school of Wilkie, of Mulready, I can only turn once more to Leslie's temperate criticisms. "Every great painter," he says, "carries us into a world of his own, where, if we give ourselves up to his guidance, we shall find much enjoyment, but if we cavil at every step, we may be sure there is a greater fault in ourselves than any we can discover in him."

We do not lower our individuality because we submit for a time and learn to see life from different points of view. I have often heard my father say that every beginner who has anything in him imitates somebody else at first, and a true and original worker does not lose but gains by merging himself for a time into the spirit of others.

The school which preceded Edwin Landseer was a placid and practical school, looking for harmonies rather than for contrasts, somewhat wanting in emotion and vividness of feeling. The meteor-like Turner blazed across the path of these quiet students without inspiring them with his own dazzling and breathless grasp of time and light. Leslie, writing of art, looks back wistfully to the times of Stothart, Fuseli, of Wilkie, Lawrence, Etty, and Constable; but, with all their harmony of colour and merits of natural expression, they do not strike the human chords that Sir Edwin has struck in his highest moments of inspiration. This much one cannot deny that his pictures are unequal, sometimes over-crowded, sometimes wanting in tone and colour; there are subjects too which seem scarce worthy of his consummate pencil. His very popularity is a hard test, and the constant reproduction of his pictures on every wall must needs blunt their fresh interest. But this is hypercriticism. How many blank front parlours, how many long dull passages and tiresome half hours of life has he changed and brightened. Remembering some of these half hours, one could almost wish that none but pleasant associations might belong to those familiar apparitions of playful paws, and trustful noses. A pretty little page returning from the chase was the playfellow of our own early life; the sun fell on his innocent head as he hung on the wall of our high-perched Paris home. Here, by a foggier fireside, the children grow up companionably with the dear big dog that is saving the little child from the sea. It was the beneficent painter himself who sent this big dog to live with us with a friendly cypher in a corner of the frame.

A friend has told us the story of another dog bestowed by the same kind hand: "About ten years ago Sir Edwin wished me to keep a dog, thinking that when I came home I should not be so lonely; he also said that he would look for one for me himself. I told him that my business occupations would not allow me to give a dog proper attention, and although Sir Edwin mentioned the subject more than once I still refused. About a month afterwards he came to dine with me one day, and when he arrived he brought a beautifully finished picture of a dog, saying, 'Here H., I have brought you a parlour boarder, I hope you won't turn him out of doors.'"

A writer in the *Daily News*, in a charmingly written notice, describes Sir Edwin's manner of working:—

"His method of composition was remarkably like Scott's, except in the point of the early rising of the latter. Landseer went late to bed and rose very late—coming down to breakfast at noon; but he had been composing perhaps for hours. Scott declared that the most fertile moments for resources, in invention especially, were those between sleeping and waking, or rather before opening the eyes from sleep, while the brain was wide awake. This, much prolonged, was Landseer's time for composing his pictures. His conception once complete, nothing could exceed the rapidity of his execution. In his best days, before his sense of failing eyesight and the rivalry of rising pre-Raphaelite art aggravated his painful fastidiousness, his rapidity was quite as marvellous as Scott's. The speed was owing to decision, and his decision was owing to the thorough elaboration of his subject in his mind before he committed it to the management of his masterly hand." The stories are numberless of the rapidity with which he executed his work. There are two little King Charles' in the South Kensington Museum, wonders of completeness and masterly painting, whose skins are silk, whose eyes gleam with light. They were said to have been painted in two days. I have read somewhere also the melancholy fact in addition that both the poor little creatures died by violent deaths.

The *Daily News* quotes a rabbit picture exhibited in the British Gallery under which Sir Edwin wrote "painted in three quarters of an hour."

The first time I was ever in Sir Edwin's studio was about twelve years ago, when we drove there one summer's day with my father to see a picture of the "Highland Flood" just then completed. We came away talking of the picture, touched by the charm and the kindness of the master of the house, laden with the violets from the garden, which he had given us. Another time the master was no longer there, but his house still opened hospitably with a kind greeting for old days' sake from those who had belonged to him and who had known my father. We were let in at the side gate. There stood the great white house that we remembered; we crossed the garden, where the dead leaves were still heaped, and some mist was hanging among the bare branches of the trees, and so by an

entrance lined with pictures into the great studio once more, where all the memories and pictures were crowding, hanging to the walls, piled against the easels. We seemed to be walking into the shrine of a long life, and one almost felt ashamed, and as if one were surprising its secrets. All about the walls and on the ceiling were time stains spreading in a dim veil; he used to say that he hated whitewash, and that he would never allow any workman but himself about the place. It seemed to me at first as if the cloud of his later days still hung about the room, where he had suffered so many cruel hours; but, looking again, there were his many bright and sweet fancies meeting us on every side, and the gloom suddenly dispelled. Everywhere are beautiful and charming things, that strike one as one looks. Perhaps it is a tender little calf's head tied by its nose, perhaps a flock of sheep against a soft grey sky. There are old companions over the chimney, Sir Roderick and David Roberts looking out of a gloom of paint; there is a lion roaring among the rocks that seems to fill the room with its din.

As we look round we see more pictures and sketches of every description. There is a little princess, in green velvet, feeding a great Newfoundland dog; there is the picture of the young man dying in some calm distant place, with a little quivering living dog upon his knee looking up into his face; near to this stands a lovely little sketch about which Miss Landseer told us a little story. One day the painter was at work when they came hurriedly to tell him that the Queen was riding up to his garden-gate, and wished him to come out to her. He was to see her mounted upon her horse for a picture he was to paint. It seemed to me like some fanciful little story out of a fairy tale, or some old-world legend. The young painter at his art; the young queen cantering up, followed by her court, and passing on, and the sketch remaining to tell the story. He has painted in the old archway at Windsor Castle; the light and queenly figure is drifting from beneath it, other people are following, the sun is shining. Many of these sketches are hasty, but there is not one that does not bear traces of the master's hand.

We all know Sir Joshua's often-quoted answer to Lord Holland, when he asked him how long he had been painting his picture.

"All my life," is written in many a picture, as it is written indeed in many a face. Take the likeness of Gibson, with his keen downcast head, simple, manly, and refined. Is not his whole life written there? With the *thrill* of this noble portrait rises a vision within a vision of another studio miles and years away. The click of the workman's hammer comes echoing through Roman sunshine—the marble dust is lying in a heap at our feet—there stands the sculptor in his working dress, pointing to the band of colour in the Venus' waving hair.

There is another portrait in the room, to which the painter has given all his best and noblest work. He has opened his magic box—Pandora's was nothing to it—and there stands a lady with her child in her arms, endowed with a gentle might of grace, of womanly instinct and beauty.

The baby's little foot is caught in the lacework of the shawl; the mother's face is turned aside. It is a charming group, refined, full of sentiment. But for all women Edwin Landseer had this courteous feeling of manly deference. There is a Highland mother sitting with a little Highland baby in her arms among limpid grays and browns; there is a lovely marchioness with a dear little chubby innocent-eyed baby upon her knee. It is all the same feeling, the same grace and tenderness of expression.

Ruskin describes somewhere the attitude of mind in which a true artist should set to work. Sham art concocts its effect bit by bit; it puts in a light here, a shade there; piles on beauties, rubs in sentiment. The true painter will receive the impression straight from the subject, and then, keeping to that precious impression, works upon it with all his skill and power of attention. Anybody can understand the difference. Even great artists like Landseer sometimes paint pictures out of tune with their own natures, where the painter's skill is evident, and his industry, but his heart is not.

But here is his heart in many a delightful sketch and completed work:—in the "loveable dogs' heads," that my companion liked so much, with eyes flashing and melting from the canvas; in the pointer's creeping along the ground; in the sportsmanlike eagerness and stir of the "otter-hunt"; in the tender uplifted paw of the little dog talking to Godiva's horse; in many a sketch and completed picture.

When Landseer first became intimate with Mr. Jacob Bell, he was not a rich man, nor had he ever been able to save any money, but under this excellent and experienced good advice and management the painter's affairs became more flourishing. When Mr. Bell died, his partner devoted himself, as he had done, to Sir Edwin's interests. The little old cottage had been added to and enlarged meanwhile, the great studio was built, the park was enclosed, the pictures and prints multiplied and spread, the painter's popularity grew.

One wonderful—never to be forgotten—night my father took us to see some great ladies in their dresses going to the Queen's fancy ball. We drove to — House (it is all very vague and dazzlingly indistinct in my mind). We were shown into a great empty room, and almost immediately some doors were flung open, there came a blaze of light, a burst of laughing voices, and from a many-twinkling dinner-table rose a company that seemed, to our unaccustomed eyes, as if all the pictures in Hampton Court had come to life. The chairs scraped back, the ladies and gentlemen advanced together over the shining floors. I can remember their high heels clicking on the floor: they were in the dress of the court of King Charles II.; the ladies beautiful, dignified, and excited. There was one, lovely and animated, in yellow; I remember her pearls shining. Another seemed to us even more beautiful, as she crossed the room all dressed in black—but she, I think, was not going to the ball; and then somebody began to say,

"Sir Edwin has promised to rouge them," and then everybody to call out for him, and there was also an outcry about his moustaches that 'really must be shaved off,' for they were not in keeping with his dress. Then, as in a dream, we went off to some other great house, Bath House perhaps, where one lady, more magnificently dressed than all the others, was sitting in a wax-lighted dressing-room, in a sumptuous sort of conscious splendour, and just behind her chair stood a smiling gentleman, also in court dress, whom my father knew, and he held up something in one hand and laughed, and said he must go back to the house from whence we came, and the lady thanked him and called him Sir Edwin. We could not understand who this Sir Edwin was, who seemed to be wherever we went. Nor why he should put on the rouge. Then the majestic lady showed us her beautiful jewelled shoe, and one person, who it was I cannot remember, suddenly fell on her knees exclaiming, "Oh, let me kiss it." Then a fairy thundering chariot carried off this splendid lady, and the nosegays of the hanging footmen seemed to scent the air as the equipage drove off under the covered way. Perhaps all this is only a dream, but I think it is true: for there was again a third house where we found more pictures alive, two beautiful young pictures and their mother, for whom a parcel was brought in post-haste containing a jewel all dropping with pearls. Events seem so vivid when people are nameless, are only faces not lives, when all life is an impression. That evening was always the nearest approach to a live fairy tale that we ever lived, and that ball more brilliant than any we ever beheld.

No wonder Edwin Landseer liked the society of these good-natured and splendid people, and no wonder they liked him. To be a delightful companion is in itself no small gift. Edwin Landseer's company was a wonder of charming gaiety. I have heard my father speak of it with the pride he used to take in the gifts of others.

I see a note about nothing at all lying on the table, which a friend has sent among some others of sadder import; but it seems to give a picture of a day's work, written as it is with "the palette in the other hand," at the time of Sir Edwin's health of labour and popularity.

"I shall like to be scolded by you," he writes. "This eve I dine with Lord Hardinge, and have to go to Lord Londesborough's after the banquet, and then to come back here to R. A. Leslie, who has a family hop—which I am afraid will entirely fill up my time, otherwise I should have been delighted to say yes. Pray give me another opportunity.

"Written, with my palette in the other hand, in honest hurry."

Perhaps Edwin Landseer was the first among modern painters who restored the old traditions of a certain sumptuous habit of living and association with great persons. The charm of manner of which kind Leslie spoke put him at ease in a world where charm of manner is not without its influence, and where his brilliant gifts and high-minded scrupulous spirit made him deservedly loved, trusted, and popular. To artistic natures especially, there is something almost irresistible in the attraction of beauty

and calm leisure, refinement. They seem to say more perhaps than such things are really worth in themselves—a lovely marchioness leaving her world of brilliant conversation and well-rubbed plate and beautifully dressed companions of high rank to devote herself to a little baby, or to tend some gentle home affection, is certainly a more attractive impersonation of domesticity than the worried and untidy materfamilias in the suburban villa who has been wearily and ignobly struggling with a maid-of-all-work, and whose way of loving and power of affection is so hurried and distracted by economies of every sort.

Lords and ladies have to thank the intellectual classes for many of the things that make their homes delightful and complete: for the noble pictures on their walls, the books that speak to them, the arts that move them; and, perhaps, the intelligent classes might in their turn learn to adorn their own homes with something of the living art which belongs to many of these well bred people, who sometimes win the best loved of the workers away from their companions and make them welcome. No wonder that men not otherwise absorbed by home ties are delighted and charmed by a sense of artistic fitness and tranquility, which surely might be more widely spread, by a certain gentleness and deference that often strike one as wanting among many good, wise, and true hearted people, who might with advantage improve their own manner and their wives' happiness by some admixture of chivalry in the round of their honest hard-working existence.

A friend has sent me the following pages, which describe Sir Edwin at this time, and I cannot do better than give them here as they have come to me.

“‘The world knows nothing of its greatest men,’ was not applicable to Landseer. Though not one of its greatest men, he was a man of acknowledged genius, and was courted, admired, made much of, by all who knew him. ‘Landseer will be with us,’ was held out as an inducement to join many a social board, where his wit, gaiety, and peculiar powers of mimicry rendered him a delightful guest. But I am speaking of him as he appeared before the fine spirit was darkened by one of the heaviest of calamities!

“Landseer's perceptions of character were remarkably acute. Not only did he know what was passing in the hearts of dogs, but he could read pretty closely into those of men and women also. The love of truth was an instinct with him; his common phrase about those he estimated highly was that ‘they had the true ring.’ This was most applicable to himself; there was no alloy in *his* metal; he was true to himself and to others. This was proved in many passages of his life, when nearly submerged by those disappointments and troubles which are more especially felt by sensitive organizations such as that which it was his fortune—or misfortune—to possess. It was a pity that Landseer, who might have done so much for the good of animal-kind, never wrote on

the subject of their treatment. He had a strong feeling against the way some dogs are tied up, only allowed their freedom now and then. He used to say a man would fare better tied up than a dog, because the former can take his coat off, but a dog lives in his for ever. He declared a tied-up dog, without daily exercise, goes mad, or dies, in three years. His wonderful power over dogs is well known. An illustrious lady asked him how it was that he gained this knowledge. 'By peeping into their hearts, ma'am,' was his answer. I remember once being wonderfully struck with the mesmeric attraction he possessed with them. A large party of his friends were with him at his house in St. John's Wood; his servant opened the door; three or four dogs rushed in, one a very fierce-looking mastiff. We ladies recoiled, but there was no fear; the creature bounded up to Landseer, treated him like an old friend, with most expansive demonstrations of delight. Some one remarking 'how fond the dog seemed of him,' he said, 'I never saw it before in my life.'

"Would that horse-trainers could have learnt from him how horses could be broken in or trained more easily by kindness than by cruelty. Once when visiting him he came in from his meadow looking somewhat dishevelled and tired. 'What have you been doing?' we asked him. 'Only teaching some horses tricks for Astley's, and here is *my* whip,' he said, showing us a piece of sugar in his hand. He said that breaking-in horses meant more often breaking their hearts, and robbing them of all their spirit.

"Innumerable are the instances, if I had the space, I could give you of his kind and wise laws respecting the treatment of the animal world, and it is a pity they are not preserved for the large portion of the world who love, and wish to ameliorate, the condition of their 'poor relations.'

"There were few studios formerly more charming to visit than Landseer's. Besides the genial artist and his beautiful pictures, the *habitudes* of his workshop (as he called it) belonged to the élite of London society, especially the men of wit and distinguished talents—none more often there than D'Orsay, with his good-humoured face, his ready wit, and delicate flattery. 'Landseer,' he would call out at his entrance, 'keep the dogs off me' (the painted ones), 'I want to come in, and some of them will bite me—and that fellow in de corner is growling furiously.' Another day he seriously asked me for a pin, and when I presented it to him and wished to know why he wanted it, he replied, 'to take de thorn out of dat dog's foot; do you not see what pain he is in?' I never look at the picture now without this other picture rising before me. Then there was Mulready, still looking upon Landseer as the young student, and fearing that all this incense would spoil him for future work; and Fonblanque, who maintained from first to last that he was on the top rung of the ladder, and when at the exhibition of some of Landseer's later works, he heard it said, 'They were not equal to his former ones,' he exclaimed in his own happy manner, 'It is hard upon Landseer to flog him with his own laurels.'

"But, dear A——, I am exceeding the limits of a letter; you asked me to write some of my impressions about Landseer, and I am sure you and all his friends will forgive me for being verbose when recalling, not only the great gifts, but delightful qualities of our lost friend."

Here is one of his early letters to this lady:—

"February 2, 1856.

"Dear ——,—I must not allow more time to vanish without thanking you for that old friendly note of yours, re-read some days ago. I fully expected to thank you personally on Wednesday last, only it was the wrong eve. I am sure that you will be pleased to hear that my brother Charles is so much better. The seaside has put him on his legs again. When are you to be at home? Remember me to Mr. Craufurd and his darling daughter.

"Believe me gratefully and sincerely yours."

"My worn-out old pencil will work with friendly gladness in an old friend's service," he writes to my father, who had asked him to draw a sketch for the *Cornhill Magazine*. Elsewhere will be read the facsimile of a second letter he sent him on the same subject.

Some years after:—

"I quite forgot that I dined with a group of doctors (a committee) at two o'clock. R. A. business after dinner. This necessity prevents me kissing hands before your departure. Don't become too Italian; don't speak broken English to your old friends on your return to our village, where you will find no end of us charmed to have you back again; and amongst them, let me say, you will find old E. L. sincerely glad to see his unvarying K. P. once more by that old fire-side."

So he writes in '63 to the friend to whom I owe the notes already given here. There is the "true ring," as he himself says, in these faithful greetings continued through a lifetime. And now that the life is over, the friend still seems there, and his hand stretches faithfully from the little blue page.

He writes again September 2, 1864:—

"Do you think you could bring Mrs. Brookfield to my lion studio to-morrow between five and six o'clock? I have forgotten her address, or would not trouble you. Have you still got that cruel dagger in your sleeve? If you can also lasso my friend Brookfield I shall be grateful, and beg you to believe me your used up old friend,

"E. L."

A little later I find a note written in better spirits. His work is done, and those great over-weighing sphinxes are no longer upon his mind. "The colossal clay," he says, "is now in Baron Marochetti's hands, casting in metal. When No. 2 is in a respectable condition remind me of Colonel Hamley's kind and highly flattering desire to see my efforts. We can, on the 3rd, discuss pictures, lions, and friends.

"Your's always,

E. L."

What efforts his work had cost him, and what a price he paid for that which he achieved, may be gathered from a letter to another correspondent, which was written about this time :—

"Dear H.," he says, "I am much surprised by your note. The plates, large vignettes, are all *the same* size. The sketches from which they were engraved for the deer stalking work being done in a sketch-book of a particular shape and size. Those of the O form all the same, as also the others. I have got quite trouble enough; ten or twelve pictures about which I am tortured, and a large national monument to complete. . . . If I am bothered about everything and anything, no matter what, I know my head will not stand it much longer."

"I cannot even leave off to read Gosling's letter," he says, writing to this same T. H. "If you will call at three you will find me." Then again, in another note, "Have the kindness to read the enclosed. Perhaps you could kindly call on the party." Then comes, "the matter which you are kind enough to express willingness to look into;" it is one long record of good advice rendered and gratitude freely given. Elsewhere Landseer writes to this same correspondent. "I have just parted from your friend P. He strongly urged me going to 45, where I have been so kindly received of late. I told him you were an object for plunder in this world, and that I was ashamed of living on you as others do." This letter is written in a state of nervous irritation which is very painful; he wishes to make changes in his house; to build, to alter the arrangements; he does not know what to decide or where to go; the struggle of an over-wrought mind is beginning to tell. It is the penalty some men must pay for their gifts; but some generous souls may not think the price of a few weary years too great for a life of useful and ennobling work.

The letters grow sadder and more sad as time goes on. Miss Landseer has kindly sent me some, written to her between 1866 and 1869. The first is written from abroad:—

"I have made up my mind to return, to face the ocean! The weather is unfriendly—sharp wind and spiteful rain. There is no denying the fact, since my arrival and during my sojourn here I have been less well. The doctors keep on saying it is on the nerves; hereafter they may be found to be in error. Kind Lady E. Peel keeps on writing for me to go to Villa Lammermoor, and says she will undertake my recovery. I desire to get home. With this feeling, I am to leave this to-morrow, pass some hours in Paris (with W. B., in a helpless state of ignorance of the French language); take the rail to Calais at night, if it does not blow cats and dogs; take the vessel to Dover; hope to be home on the 6th before two o'clock. If C. L. had started to come here he might have enjoyed *unlimited* amusement and novelty. B. M. and I wrote to that effect; he leaving on Sunday night. . . . would have found me and B. M. waiting his arrival to bring him here to dinner."

The next is a letter from Balmoral, dated June 1867:—

"The Queen kindly commands me to get well here. She has to-day been twice to my room to show additions recently added to her already rich collection of photographs. Why, I know not, but since I have been in the Highlands I have for the first time felt wretchedly weak, without appetite. The easterly winds, and now again the unceasing cold rain, may possibly account for my condition, as I can't get out. Drawing tires me; however, I have done a little better to-day. The doctor residing in the castle has taken me in hand, and gives me leave to dine to-day with the Queen and the 'rest of the royal family.' . . . Flogging would be mild compared to my sufferings. No sleep, fearful cramp at night, accompanied by a feeling of faintness and distressful feebleness. . . All this means that I shall not be home on the 7th."

He seems to have returned to Scotland a second time this year, and writes from Lochlinhart, Dingwall:—

"I made out my journey without pausing, starting on the eve of Thursday the 3rd, arriving here the evening of Friday (700 miles) the 4th. I confess to feeling jaded and tired. The whole of hills here present to the eye one endless mass of snow. It is really cold and winterly. Unless the weather recovers a more *generous* tone I shall not stay long, but at once return south to Chillingham. I was tempted yesterday to go out with Mr. Coleman to the low ground part of the forest, and killed my first shot, at deer. I am paying for my boldness to-day, Sunday. All my joints ache; the lumbago has reasserted its unkindness; a warm bath is in requisition, and I am a poor devil. Unless we have the comfort of genial sunshine, I shall not venture on getting out. . . I am naturally desirous to hear from you, and to receive a report of the progress of goings on at my home. We have here Mr. C. M. and a third gentleman, just arrived. Mr. Coleman has returned to London on account of his mother's ill health. I have written to H., but in case he has not received my note, let him know my condition; say I shall be very glad to hear from him when he goes to Paris, and how long he remains in foreign parts. I hope you have found Mr. B. and the maids respectfully attentive.

"My dear Jessy, affectionately yours,

"E. LANDSEER."

The years seem to pass slowly as one reads these letters written in snow and rain and depression. Here is another, dated Stoke Park, July, 1868, which contains a few touching sentences:—

"Dear Jessy,—Strange enough, but I have only just found at the bottom of the bag your little package of letters. Many thanks for your pale green note, so far satisfactory. I believe it is best to yield to Mr. C.'s advice, and remain here another day or two. It is on the cards that I try my boldness by a run up to my home and back here the same day. It is quite a trial for me to be away from the meditation in the old studio—my works starving for my hand."

The last letter is written in 1869 from Chillingham Castle, where he seems to have been at home and in sympathy, although he writes so sadly :—

“Very mortifying are the disappointments I have to face; one day seeming to give hope of a decided turn in favour of natural feeling, the next knocked down again. If my present scheme comes off, I shall not be at home again for ten days. If on my return I find myself a victim to the old impulsive misery, I shall go on to Eastwall Park, as the Duchess of Abercorn writes she will take every care of me. Since I last wrote I have been on a visit to the Dowager Marchioness of Waterford, Ford Castle, a splendid old edifice, which C. L. would enjoy. Love to all.”

I go on selecting at hazard from the letters before me :—

“Again accept my gratitude for your constant kindness,” he writes to his faithful T. H. H. “The spell is broken in a mild form, but the work is too much for me. The long long walk in the dark, after the shot is fired, over rocks, bog, black moss, and through torrents, is more than enough for *twenty-five* !

“Poor C. has been very ill rewarded for his Highland enterprise. Fifteen hundred miles of peril on the rail; endless bad weather whilst he was here, without killing one deer; finally obliged to hurry off. . . . I have begged him not to think of undertaking another long journey on my account, even in the event of his being able to leave home. . . . It is like you to think of my request touching medicines for the poor here. . . . We have a dead calm after the wicked weather; not a dimple in the lake. I am not bold yet. Possibly reaction may take place in the quiet of the studio. I shall not start on great difficulties, but on child’s play.”

Here is another letter, written in the following spring :—

“March 11th, 1869.

“I know you like water better than oil; but, in spite of your love of paper-staining, I venture to beg your acceptance of these oil studies, which you will receive as old friends from the Zoo.

“In some respects they will recall the interest you took in my labours for the Nelson lions, and I hope will always remind you of my admiration for your kindly nature, to say nothing of my endless obligations to your unceasing desire to aid a poor old man, nearly used up.

“Dear T. H. H., ever sincerely yours,

“E. LANDSEER.”

Here is a letter which is very characteristic :—

“Saturday Eve, 5 June.

“Dear H,—I am not quite content with myself touching the proposed suggestion of our taking advantage of an offer made by — for the two pictures. He has not put his desire to have the pictures in writing, has he? We must talk it over to-morrow if you come up at four o’clock, or sooner. . . . The enclosed letters are most friendly, as you will see.

Read them and bring them up to-morrow. I am anything but well ; botherations unfit me for healthy work. You must pat me on the back to-morrow ; at the same time, if anything has turned up more attractive don't bind yourself to me.

"I should not dislike a drive or a walk to-morrow before dinner."

He writes once again :—

"I have a great horror of the *smell* of a trick, or a money motive."

"My dear Hills,—My health (or rather condition) is a mystery quite beyond human intelligence. I sleep well seven hours, and awake tired and jaded, and do not rally till after luncheon. J. L. came down yesterday and did her very best to cheer me. She left at nine. . . . I return to my own home, in spite of a kind invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone to meet Princess Louise at breakfast.

"I wonder if you are free to-morrow. I shall try and catch you for a little dinner with me, tho' I am sure to find you better engaged.

"Dear H., ever thine,

"E. L."

Then comes the sad concluding scene—the long illness and the anxious watch. Was ever any one more tenderly nursed and cared for ? Those who had loved him in his bright wealth of life now watched the long days one by one, telling away its treasure. He was very weak in body latterly, but sometimes he used to go into the garden and walk round the paths, leaning on his sister's arm. One beautiful spring morning he looked up and said, "I shall never see the green leaves again ;" but he did see them, Mrs. Mackenzie said. He lived through another spring. He used to lie in his studio, where he would have liked to die. To the very end he did not give up his work ; but he used to go on, painting a little at a time, faithful to his task.

When he was almost at his worst—so some one told me—they gave him his easel and his canvas, and left him alone in the studio, in the hope that he might take up his work and forget his suffering. When they came back they found that he had painted the picture of a little lamb lying beside a lion. This and "The Font" were the last pictures ever painted by that faithful hand. "The Font" is an allegory of all creeds and all created things coming together into the light of truth. The Queen is the owner of "The Font." She wrote to her old friend and expressed her admiration for it, and asked to become the possessor. Her help and sympathy brightened the sadness of those last days for him. It is well known that he appealed to her once, when haunted by some painful apprehensions, and that her wise and judicious kindness came to the help of his nurses. She sent him back a message : bade him not be afraid, and to trust to those who were doing their best for him, and in whom she herself had every confidence.

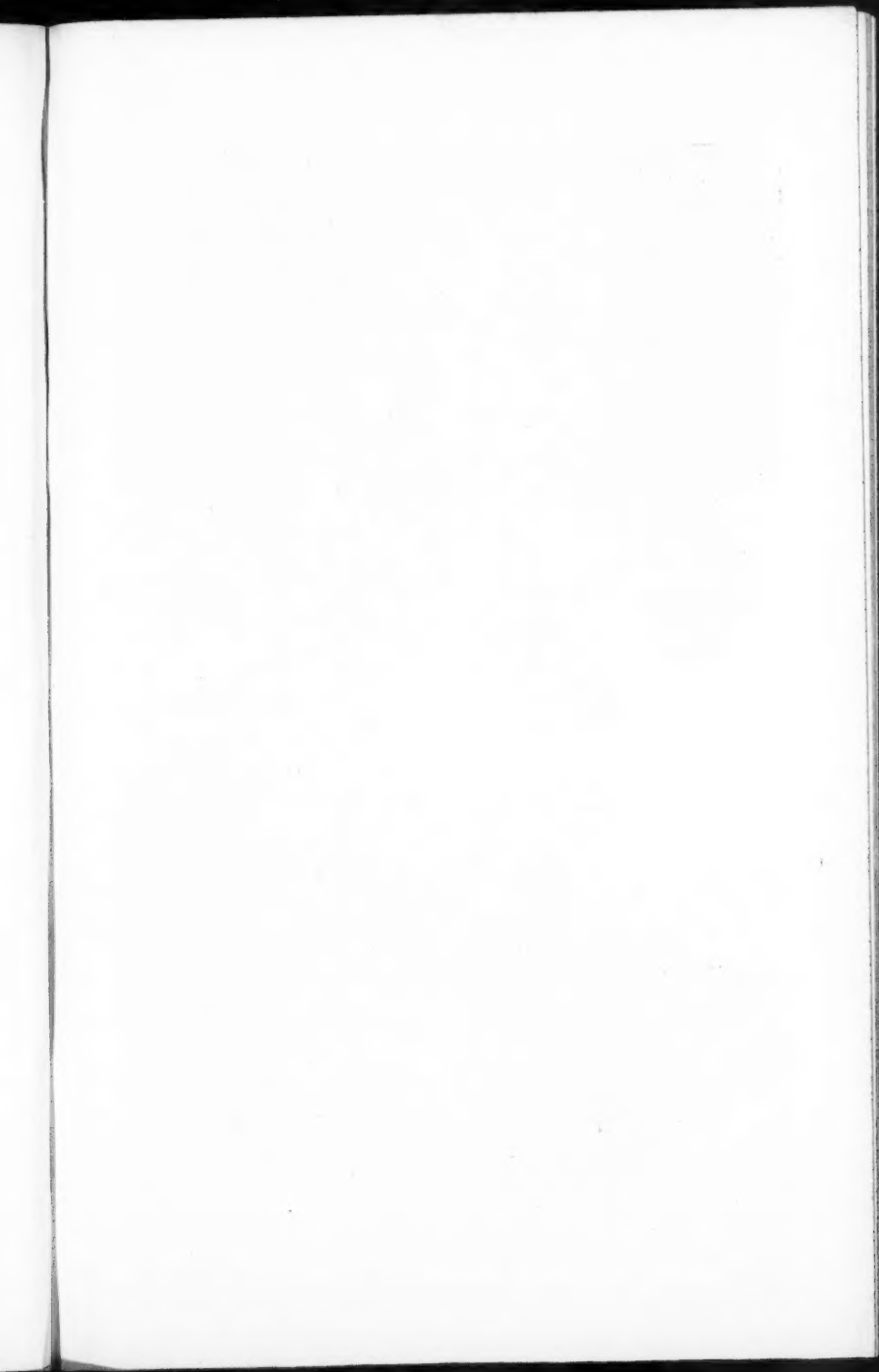
Sir Edwin once told Mr. Browning that he had thought upon the subject, and come to the conclusion that the stag was the bravest of all

animals. Other animals are born warriors, they fight in a dogged and determined sort of way; the stag is naturally timid, trembling, vibrating with every sound, flying from danger, from the approach of other creatures, halting to fight. When pursued its first impulse is to escape; but when turned to bay and flight is impossible it fronts its enemies nobly, closes its eyes not to see the horrible bloodshed, and with its branching horns steadily tosses dog after dog up one upon the other, until overpowered at last by numbers it sinks to its death.

It seems to me, as I think of it, not unlike a picture of his own sad end. Nervous, sensitive, high-minded, working on to the end, he was brought to bay and at last overpowered by that terrible mental rout and misery.

He wished to die in his studio—his dear studio for which he used to long when he was away, and where he lay so long expecting the end, but it was in his own room that he slept away. His brother was with him. His old friend came into the room. He knew him, and pressed his hand . . .

As time goes on the men are born, one by one, who seem to bring to us the answers to the secrets of life, each in his place and revealing in his turn according to his gift. Such men belong to nature's true priesthood, and among their names, not forgotten, will be that of Edwin Landseer.



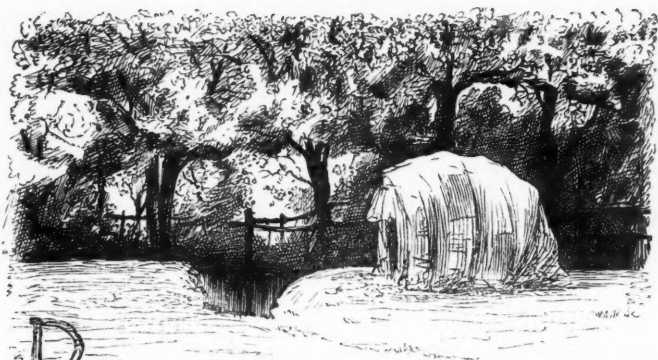


HE SAT BY CLAUDIA'S SIDE IN MUTE DESPAIR.

Zelda's Fortune.

CHAPTER VII.

ZELDA WINS.



BUT, as Harold Vaughan would have said, it is Fate that disposes; and his Fate incarnate, Zelda, had still her part to perform. Claudia believed she was the opponent of Aaron in the game—she was in truth the adversary of an unknown player who held unseen and unsuspected cards.

The words "I am not his sister" literally scorched her like fire. What was she then, if, without any intelligible tie of blood between them, he was nevertheless more to her than all the world? She demanded the old tinker's hospitality with the air of one who had just stepped from the invisible universe, and who preferred her claim with the authority of no earthly queen. Then she set out to bring him—him who was not her brother—to the tents of those who were his people and but half hers. But she did not reach him—she sat down under the bush again.

What could it all mean? She had worshipped Harold Vaughan without knowing or heeding why, and had accepted their supposed bond of blood-relationship as a mysterious but still all-sufficient cause. Now that this was swept away, she was driven to look below the surface of her life: and, with a quick rush, every word that Lord Lisburn had spoken when he offered himself to her came back filled with most intense meaning. She was incapable of thought, but her mind saw—and it saw that what Lord Lisburn asked from her she had already, even then, given ten times over to Harold Vaughan. That was why the Earl's words had not

touched her—that was why she had been unable to recognise the name of Love when used by him. It is hard to speak of such a revelation as one of joy—yet what other word can be used, however much it may be mingled with a thousand unrealised shames and self-reproaches, when a woman first learns from her own heart what Love means? If it had not been for this, she would have lived and died, and never known her own soul. And yet, over the joy itself there hung a shadow. She was no martyr to give all and receive nothing in return beyond a brother's tolerance. He must know her even as she knew herself, and what would his answer be? What if her answer to Lord Lisburn should recoil upon her own head, and if her discarded lover should be thus terribly avenged? She had looked forward to their being so happy together in the relationship that she thought it, in her ignorance of all such things, to be the key to all her hopes and desires; and now the key had proved as useless as that of Mrs. Goldrick's strong-box, and her treasure as much like Fairy-gold. Even to pass her life with him, unless under new and perhaps impossible conditions, would now be far worse than her life before she knew herself—for the first time in her life she knew what she desired, and for the first time she almost despaired.

She rose at last with a throbbing heart, and found him, resting obediently where she had bidden him wait for her.

"You are back at last, Zelda! Why what has happened?" he asked, suddenly observing a second transformation in the strange being whom he had passively given up trying to understand. The first transformation, that flashed upon him when she raised her veil, had been the result of the birth of the mind; what he saw now was the final struggle of the heart into the first glorious moment of self-consciousness before the joy is wholly lost in pain. Their wanderings in close and constant companionship, and in a belief that birth had made them more than mere companions, had necessarily brought about much familiarity between them. She was never absent from his side, and used to sit as close to his feet as a loving spaniel. Now she stood far off and looked towards him with tender and timid eyes.

"Nothing," she answered. "We are at our journey's end. I have found food and shelter—that is all."

"Among your people, the Gipsies—I see. Well, so be it. That, for a time, will serve us for a new world. I am dark enough to pass for one myself," he said with a half-smile. "Indeed I wish I had been born one, with all my soul."

"Would you live with them always?"

"I would live anywhere, Zelda; all places are alike to me." "Where Claudia is not," his heart added; and, though she only heard his words, she sighed.

"You are not happy," she said. "How happy I would make you, if I knew how!"

"You are a dear and good girl, Zelda. I judged you all wrongly.

I know you try to make me happy so hard that it is a sin in me to let you fail. But you can't know everything; the world has been harder upon me than a girl like you, who know nothing of its ways, can tell."

"But if you loved?"

"What can you know of love, Zelda—who tell me yourself that a brother is the only man you ever dreamed of caring for?"

"What can I know? Come, let us go in. But tell me, what should you do if——?"

"If what?"

"Nothing—I don't know what I meant to say. Ah, there's the old tinker's dog; and there's the tinker. And now—welcome home."

In spite of all his misfortunes, the Doctor could not fail to take an interest in his new quarters, and made himself as companionable to his host as possible, from whom he gathered more of that world without the world into which he had strayed than most men—ignorant as most of us are of its very existence—gather in a lifetime. Zelda sat apart, with her chin on her knees, listening to their talk with her eyes. When her two companions lay down to sleep under the tent, she made some excuse, and set herself to wake behind her bush under the stars. The poor Cornflower had thought them the ducats of heaven; Zelda thought them the floating love-dust of the world.

Harold Vaughan had scarcely closed his eyes before he opened them again. He was not disposed for sleep, the tent did not attract it, and he wanted the fresh air. He lighted a pipe—an indulgence of which his vagrant life had taught him the inestimable value—sat down by the dead embers, and thought as men think whose bodies are weary and whose minds are oppressed by painful wakefulness. It was a glorious night, and recalled his former musings under the Pole-star—the only thing in all the visible universe that never seems to change. He had chosen it for the symbol of destiny, fixed and immutable. But his philosophy reminded him that even the Pole-star himself may not be at absolute rest in infinite space, though he might not vary by the breadth of a child's hair in a million years. He might have pursued the thought into a hundred remote and fanciful analogies between what we call fate and its symbol, and have asked himself how the wandering nature of any human life can assume to itself the belief in a fixed destiny that cannot be claimed for the most immutable of the stars themselves, until he traced them to the bottom of his heart, where the image of Claudia attracted in time all other thoughts, as if she herself had been their pole. Doubtless this would have been the end of his reverie, when he was startled by the sound of a low moan.

He listened again; it came from behind the bush, and sounded like the voice of a woman either in sorrow or pain. He went softly round, and, by the light of the stars, saw Zelda crouched together on the turf, weeping bitterly.

He had more tenderness for a woman's weakness than of old—he had seen tears in Zelda's eyes before, through the paint of the stage, and then he had been harsh and stern. Now, he approached her gently. Her solitary, unexpected grief, let loose and confessed to the stars and to the ears of the summer night alone, this weeping out of a girl's unknown sorrows when none but the heavenly watchers were by to see, was so sacred in its mournful solemnity, that he trod as if he had entered a cathedral door and stood before a shrine of tears. How could he think, believing what he did, that these tears were for him?

He came near to her almost as gently as she always came near to him, and when he saw that she had felt his approach, he took her hand.

"What is it, Zelda, my little sister? I knew something had happened when you came back to me from the tent—will you not tell me?"

Zelda's heart was of July, but her tears were of April, when her sun rose. There was more than a little of Marietta in her, besides her trick of stamping on the floor. But it must not be thought that rippling waves are always the sign of a shallow sea. She had her mother's quickness of impulse, but her depths were her own. Still, her mother's milk had given her the gift of swiftly dried tears, and she looked up with eyes whose tear-marks were invisible—at least in the star-beams.

"You came to me because I was fool enough to be crying?" she said, softly.

"I did not know it was you till I saw you—but I should have come."

"You are kind to me at last, then. Oh, it would be too dreadful if you were not kind to me any more."

"I hope I shall never seem unkind to you, Zelda. You are the only living creature who has ever tried to be kind to me. Surely that is not why you are sitting out here, all alone in the night? Have I seemed unkind?"

"You may be as unkind as you like," she said, with bold inconsistency, "all but in one way. Don't leave me—don't send me away."

"That is not likely, is it? But how can you tell that one of these days you mayn't want to send me away?"

"I send you—I want to send you!"

"My dear Zelda, it doesn't follow, does it, that because you cared for your brother better than for Lord Lisburn, that you may always care for him better than for some man—say in our own new world—whom you have never yet seen? You are young and beautiful—suppose some one comes some day and asks me, your brother, for Zelda?"

"Suppose—and what should you say?"

"I should ask you if you loved him. If you said yes, I should say, go to him—only be faithful; believe only one another, and think everything that others say, however dear to you, is a lie. Be to one another each other's whole world, and let no one else in. I don't know if that would be the right way, but I'm sure any other would be the wrong."

"And I'm sure it is the right way—the only right way. And suppose I said no, like I ought to have to Lord Lisburn?" she asked, with an eager tremor in her tone.

"I don't think you'd always say no, Zelda. But if you did, you should tramp on with me until your time came."

"Then the time will never come—I'll always tramp on with you. But—would you give me up so easy to anybody that came?"

"I should have no right to keep you. But come—you will catch your death of damp and cold—come nearer the fire, and I'll make you up the best bed I can."

"No—please—not yet," and she laid her hand on his arm, but drew it away suddenly. "Suppose something else—suppose the old Barengro, or anybody, came and told you I was not your sister—as I supposed all along—what then?"

"Don't talk nonsense, there's a good girl. You're tired, and want sleep. I shouldn't believe the old Barengro, that's all."

"I won't go to sleep till you've supposed."

She spoke so anxiously that a dim doubt rose in Harold Vaughan. He thought she was only putting cases, but still he answered kindly, but decisively—

"Then we should have to part, that's all—you your way and I mine—unless, indeed, I married you," he added, with another quarter smile. "And now let me make you a bed by the embers."

"Then you must marry me," she said outright and like a queen. "We won't part, and I am not your sister."

"Zelda—in heaven's name, are you joking—do you mean what you say? Then——"

"Joking? Not I. Ask the Barengro—I heard it from him and Aaron behind the bush here. No—indeed I did not know it before. And now—for God's sake you are not going to say that dreadful thing again—I shall take a knife and cut my throat open if you do. I can't live away from you and without the love you can give me now."

"I can't say a word if this is true. Tell me all. This is terrible. No, Zelda—I don't mean what you think I mean—my poor girl, whether sister or not I would do anything for you in the world—but—tell me all—don't lose a moment."

She told him in broken words, wondering and afraid, yet like a penitent making her confession, everything she knew, even down to her adventure in the house of Mrs. Goldrick. He listened, and as she went on, said not a word, but buried his face in his hands.

How could any man who was not a cur reproach her for what she had done out of sheer love for him? It was impossible for a man of honour, for the gentleman that the gipsy-born workhouse boy tried consistently to be, to take advantage of her confession even to seek to redeem his own name. It seemed to cut him off from Claudia more than ever—perhaps the point of honour had unconsciously a stronger

force with him just because his having been born and bred on the wrong side of the social hedge made him exaggerate its demands. He was a gentleman by conversion, as it were, and converts are notoriously fanatical. He must not be surpassed by Lord Lisburn, who had once presumed to teach him the duties of a gentleman.

"Zelda," he said at last, very gravely, and with a touch of his old sternness, "Zelda—you have given up for me more than you know. I don't say that you have cut me off from the world, but I am cut off, and there's an end. I cannot disbelieve a word you say—you have told me the truth, and it all agrees with what I know and feel to be true. What to do I know not—to-morrow must decide——"

"No—no to-morrow—I cannot bear another hour. And I must live for you, come what may. Kill me if you like—I will kiss your knife and your hand—but tell me now that you will not leave me—now!"

"What can I say?"

"Say what I would have you say—that you will love me still—will love me in my way—or that you will let me love you in my own. I will be your very slave. What more could I have done for you—no, that was nothing—what less could I have done? I have found my soul, and it is all yours. Who is there loves you but I?"

"None—none—I know that; but—no: the sooner I cut that last shred of my old life away, the better for us all. Whatever you have done, you have fairly earned a right to deal with me as yours. You need not tell me what you have done for me—I know it all—you gave up name, fame, rank, wealth, all things, and all for me."

"I gave up nothing," she said proudly. "They were all yours—I had given them up, oh, long before they were mine to throw away for you."

"Zelda," he said at last, after a long silence, in which he sought honestly to do his duty as a gentleman, and so yielded to the storm of passion on which his Fate rode, "you have earned all I have to give—name, fame, and more. You stood by me when all, even my best friends, turned their backs and passed by on the other side. You alone sought to heal my wounds—you are more than my Destiny—you have tried to be its Angel. What I have to give you I must, and I will. You have shown that you know what to be a wife means. Be mine, then, and we two will try to make a world of our own. I will give you my life, and if my whole heart is slow in coming, you must be patient and wait till the end."

Not even then was he false to Claudia, whose one thought was of him. But from her he was cut off for evermore—and who was he that, for the sake of a vanished dream, he should reject the divine consolation of perfect love, and selfishly destroy a second life as well as his own? He took her hand.

"At last!" she exclaimed, pressing it with her lips. Her life's dream was marvellously fulfilled.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PILGRIMS.

I AM a little ashamed, not for myself indeed, but for a certain side of human nature not the less true for being mightily disagreeable, that a man who was simply no more than a common human shuttlecock, with a few good points about him for feathers, should have been chosen for the prize of a contest between Claudia's true and noble heart and Zelda's passionate soul. Once for all, and for the thousandth time, men, unhappily, are loved less for what they are than for what they are thought to be by those who love them. So it was with Squire Maynard in Vienna, so with Doctor Vaughan in St. Bavons, and so *sicut erat in principio, in sæculis sæculorum*. The Doctor had no *valet*, neither Zelda nor Claudia had a *femme de chambre*, so that he had not to undergo the de-heroizing process of the back-stairs filter. I do not say he would not have made an excellent husband for Claudia. Theirs would have been a match of the truest, firmest, and most sympathetic affection, that begins well, wears well, and ends well. But as a husband who brought but half a heart, as a mere good and honourable man, matched with such a Sylvia of Westphalia and the Oberon as Zelda, what should he be? A Count of Falkenstein, a stage tenor to a *prima donna*, or a broken-down man, crushed with fatalistic fancies, and with his duty-love of habit and gratitude drawing out her heart's love like a vampyre until she woke up one morning to find her veins drained dry? He is no favourite of mine, any more than of fortune, but I own him worthy of a better destiny. In considering his character I find no flagrant fault, not any so-called weakness, whereon to lay my hand. He was brave. He was a man of his word. Therefore a gentleman. He was prompt and ready when his wits or knowledge or instruments were required, his active sympathies and help ever ready, his industry and independence almost extreme, his life temperate and pure. All who knew him would have called him a good man; those who only heard of him would have called him a strong man. And yet he is no favourite of mine. And he has proved himself no hero, and yet he was fought for and loved as if he had been a very hero of romance. I suppose that Claudia and Zelda looked at him with hero-making women's eyes, and I with the hero-unmaking eyes of a fellow-man—or it may be with his own over-self-analysing eyes.

But Zelda was in the seventy times heaven of content, or rather of joy. She loved not the imperfect hero, but the imperfect man; nor was she repelled by a want of special heart-sympathy which wore the air of lofty strength to her. She only half-wondered how her impossible harvest had now been actually reaped and garnered—it seemed to her that all things must have come to pass with such love as hers. Her jealousy of Claudia fled away like a nightmare at morning—she judged all things, and all others, by herself, and could not imagine the case of a man's giving his life to one, while he left his heart in the hands of another.

Though she had herself lived three lives, Zelda, Sylvia, and Pauline, they were now at length merged in one, nor could she ever attain to the complicated idea of a man dividing himself into two. The bond of marriage, which she had been told by two men who were both, of course, so infinitely wiser than herself, and of whom one was the wise man *par excellence*, was the expression and fulfilment of love, must of course also prove to her that world of two in one within an outer world of many of which Harold Vaughan had spoken, and thus solve the secret of all mysteries.

She, knowing and caring nothing about forms or laws, held herself to be his wife from the moment when Harold Vaughan had said his "I will" in the bush-chapel under the stars. She would have needed nothing more. But she listened patiently and attentively while her husband explained to her the need there was, from his point of view, to make her his wife according to the laws of men. The Curate of St. Catherine's had not been wrong in his estimate of Harold Vaughan's respect for diviner laws; but to have omitted placing her in the best position possible would have seemed to him like taking advantage of innocence and purity. She wondered a little that he should still care so much about the ways of men, and that he should pay regard to what others might think or say of him or her; but it was enough for her that it was His desire. But though to him they were merely betrothed, she was never weary of telling herself that she was now his wife, his world, in order that she might realise, as soon as might be, the glory of such a paradise, and he could see that all the forms in the world could not bind her to him more closely than she was already bound. And therefore, in truth, though not by law, he was none the less closely bound to her.

They still had a little money left from the sale of the watch, and the disposal of Zelda's few remaining trinkets, and of their clothes, managed through the old gipsy, brought them a little more. His plan was to strike northwards till they reached Scotland, where Vaughan had an idea that they might become husband and wife according to law without the difficulties which he could not bring himself to face in England. He put on a second or third hand suit of common clothes. Zelda, with the delight of a *belle* dressing for a ball, returned to her old costume of the scarlet hood, in which he had first seen her at Lessmouth. It was her sole piece of extravagance, and she revelled in the purchase, nor could she rest until she had run down the hill to admire herself in the stream. It was thus he found her one afternoon, leaning over the rough rail of a bridge, smiling at her own image, and singing softly to herself the close of her fatal song—

Through mirk or glim I'd sail with him
If he would sail with me.²

It was then he told her of his plan, and she answered almost in the very words of Ruth to Naomi:

"Where you go I'll go too. Your wishes shall be my wishes—all and always—your love shall be my love. Oh, tell me I look beautiful in my new red shawl!"

It was so obviously impossible to settle down anywhere with such a wife as she, and with his own unsettled and vagrant heart—perhaps the gipsy blood in him was beginning to break out in the free air—that, after revolving every alternative, he determined to bind himself apprentice to his host, and, instead of mending broken legs and arms, to mend broken pots and pans. He could thus repay the cost of the hospitality he had received, and learn to gain his living in the only way by which he could fulfil his duty of making his bride happy. And in such a life, who could tell the good he might not do? He would be an apostle of light to those who need an apostle from among themselves—to the great *imperium in imperio* of thieves and Bohemians who are such because from their birth they are taught to read the book of social ethics upside down, and because they suspect those who come from without to preach to them of trying to deceive them for private ends.

To the old gipsy the look of Zelda the prophetess was law, and the Rom who was wise among the Gorgios was himself a prophet, and a mate for her. I am not sure that Harold did not sink a little on two occasions in his estimation—when he first tried in vain to mend a tin kettle, and when he objected to take part in snaring a hare. But the third kettle the pupil mended as well as the master, and the objection to hare-snaring became a proof of occult wisdom in a man who could tie up a cut more skilfully than an old woman, and who could read like a parson.

The first book he bought out of his earnings for the edification of his companions was the *Pilgrim's Progress*, by their fellow-craftsman—perhaps their fellow-countryman. It was a wise choice, for it made the old man listen, and turned Zelda's vague fancies into thoughts with names, that led to endless questions that took days to answer.

He could not forget Claudia; but the time was not come when a man of his stamp would weary of so simple and savage a life, and of only having to exercise a cultivated mind in being spiritual director to an old man and a young girl, without zeal for the soul of the one, or all-sufficing love for the other. Meanwhile, however, the thought of Claudia, the true helpmeet for him, though undying, was lulled into a troubled sleep. As they wandered on by short journeys, every day was well filled with itself. He worked hard at his trade, earned hunger and fatigue, and Zelda had not nearly reached the end of a legitimate interest that, while it lasted, was no bad substitute for the heart-love which she craved.

There was no apparent reason why such a lull should not go on for ever. But when did false calm ever fail yet to come to an end? Poor Zelda! it was only due to her that she should have one brief season of happiness in a world of which love could not reveal all the secrets.

"Thus they went on," read Harold Vaughan, one evening, "talking of what they had seen by the way, and so made that way easy which would otherwise no doubt have been tedious to them; for now they went through a wilderness. Now when they were got almost quite out of this wilderness, FAITHFUL chanced to cast his eye back, and spied one coming after them, and he knew him. Oh, said FAITHFUL to his brother, who comes yonder? Then——"

It was not Evangelist. Harold's eyes were upon his book, the old gipsy's were on the reader; but Zelda's had a trick of wandering upwards, and they caught sight of a well-known figure crossing the hillside in front of them. She shuddered, for she saw him who now represented all evil to her, and her soul shrank together, like a sparrow before the coming storm. She did not hear a word as Harold read on:—

"Then CHRISTIAN looked and said, It is my good friend EVANGELIST. Aye, and my good friend too, said FAITHFUL, for it was he that set me the way to the gate. Now as EVANGELIST came up unto them, he thus saluted them: Peace be with you, dearly beloved, and peace be to your helpers."

The reading was over, and the figure on the hillside passed by.

The next day Zelda was left with the tent alone. The old man and his apprentice had to visit a circle of three or four hamlets to look for pots and pans, and did not expect to return before nightfall.

They had left the lurcher to guard the tent and the girl, who set to work to prepare dinner according to the best culinary traditions of her people. She had been well trained in that respect by Aaron, and though Harold was no epicure, the old man and herself—for her soul was lodged in a singularly healthy house—liked to live well. Not even happy love could deprive her of her liking for roast fowl, and she was a *connoisseur* in spring water.

Through mirk or glim,

she hummed, when the lurcher pricked up his ears. She trembled. Was her vision of Aaron Goldrick about to prove reality?

It was not Aaron Goldrick. It was a lady and gentleman—the former in deep black—walking, not arm-in-arm, but side by side. Zelda's far-seeing eyes gave the lie to her lips, which exclaimed "impossible!" Up went her scarlet hood over her black eyes and down over her face till it reached her chin. Scarcely, even had she left her face uncovered, would anyone have recognised Mademoiselle Pauline Leczinska, late of the Oberon, in 'a vagrant gipsy girl. There would have been a singular, perhaps startling resemblance—nothing more.

The lady in crape stood a little back while the gentleman came near. She left her pot, and dropped him a silent curtsy.

"That's the picturesque made easy, by Jupiter!" he said, taking off his hat and bowing politely to the gipsy girl. "I'm a Bohemian

myself, but here's the real thing. Why it's near as real as Vauxhall—a regular Michael Angelo. Come, my pretty girl—I know you are one—put up that hood of yours; this lady here's a great painter, and she'll draw you, hang you, and quarter you too—unless she likes profile or three-quarters—before you know where you are. It doesn't hurt, I promise you."

"Does the pretty lady want her fortune?" asked Zelda in a sing-song whine.

"No, thank you," said Claudia, coming forward; "I don't care about my fortune. I only want to ask you——"

Carol whispered to her. "You had better," he said. "You won't get nothing for nothing. The lady only wants to ask you her way," he said to Zelda. "We've been out rather a long walk, and want to get home. But if you can tell fortunes——"

"Is it gold fortune or silver fortune for your dear lady?"

"A gold fortune, please—all gold—the very best article on the premises."

Claudia held out her hand. Zelda took it, and the spirit of triumph over her rival came upon her with a strength too exciting to withstand.

"Now listen to me," she half chaunted in a monotonous and high-pitched whine. "It's a gold fortune. There's plenty of gold; but the line of life's long, and the line of money runs dry. No more gold after a while. You'll be rich and you'll be poor. Isn't it true? Now listen to me. I'm a true girl, I am, and don't give lies for gold. If you don't like your Fortune, it's the lines, not me. There's a dark young man you're fond of—I see him as plain as you—and he'll be in trouble and out again. Isn't it true? But he isn't fond of you, nor never will be, want as you will—That'll make her hand shake," thought Zelda: but no; it lay in hers as steady as if made of diamond. It was Zelda's hand that trembled—not Claudia's. "No, I can't make him fond of you, not if you fill my fists with guineas. And he'll marry a dark girl, and go over the sea, and you'll never see him again. But be of good heart, my pretty lady; there's as good fish in the river as ever was brought ashore, and maybe there's a fair young man with moustachios not far away as'll ask you to marry him, and then you'll think on the poor gipsy's words. Thank you, my lady—a good wedding to your ladyship and many of them, if so be you've a mind."

Her shot, intended to be cruel, missed fire; indeed, Claudia scarcely heard what she took for the common-form nonsense about dark girls and fair young men.

"How many are there of you here?" asked Claudia. "Am I right in thinking you have with you an old man and a young gentleman, who is amusing himself in going about the country? Are they here? I am a relation of the young gentleman, and have the most important news for him, and I must see him. You can take a message, I suppose?"

To say that Zelda felt jealous would be absurd. An eagle is not

jealous when guarding her nest, and her love was more to her than if she had been a mother-eagle. She would have denied the young gentleman's existence had she dared; but she dared run no more risks of offending him, and, otherwise, she was not afraid. Her husband was her own, and was not to be torn from her the length of an inch by the hand of woman.

"I dare say I can take a message," she answered, curiously.

"Tell him that I wish to see him. Give him this," and she wrote her name with a pencil, and a few words more. "When will he be back here again?"

"Before sundown."

"I will come again at seven. It is most important, mind. Here is something more for you."

"Good-bye, my dear," said Carol, kissing his hand. "You shall tell my fortune the next time."

Zelda curtsied, watched them out of sight, and then tore up the paper and threw the pieces, with Claudia's money, into the fire.

"She may come back if she likes, she and Carol, but we'll be on another three miles or more by then," she thought, and returned to her cooking. She was more than a little nervous; but she was not going to leave a loophole for a change of fortune now. Claudia must be nothing to him, even a visitor; Zelda must be all. Good or bad news, Harold must now and henceforth know nothing but her.

Suddenly she looked up from her pot to see, on the turf before her, her demon—Aaron. He was lying down like an overweary man, and he did not even take the trouble to attract her attention.

"So, my young woman," he said, "it's a long time since you've seen me—you hoped it might be longer, maybe."

"I hope it may be for ever. What brings you here?"

"Where else should I come but where you are, that I brought up like as if you'd been my own child? No, I'm not come to stay. I only waited till the coast's clear, and I could say a word to yourself—that's all. No, nor you won't call out. Your friends are far off, and *my* friend—that's my mistress, Miss Brandt—won't be back till I heard when. Maybe you don't call to mind what's between you and me? We're in the same boat, we are."

Zelda fired up, but could not hide her fear of what this double visit might forebode. "If you are found out—if you are running away, you had better be gone. It's true I'm alone, but you mayn't be best pleased if I put the dog at you."

"And you mayn't be best pleased if you don't hear what I've got to say. I know how to quiet dogs, I do—you ought to know that, any how. I'm done, I am—done black. I've been sold by a Gorgio—Benguilango take her: and there she goes."

"Be off. She is nothing to me, nor you."

"She's nothing to you, is she? If she isn't, I'm a scragged man—

and if I'm a seragged man you're a seragged woman, for by heaven I'll give myself up and you for an accomplice."

"Fool!—as though he would believe you before me. Is it to tell me such fools' tales you come here?"

"Fool, am I? Fool yourself, Miss Zelda, if that's your name still. So you don't care for aught but him?"

"I care for no-one now but my husband—if you mean Harold Vaughan."

"And I suppose you think he cares for nought but you? I'm done by a she-devil, Zelda my girl, and so are you. You listen to me, and then say if we're together again, you and I, yes or no."

CHAPTER IX.

AARON'S MOTHER'S LEGACY.

"I AM listening," said Zelda. Even now he was hateful to her because he was Aaron—not simply because his hands were blood-stained. Murder, as I have said, was to her but death, so long as the victim was not Harold Vaughan.

"And so," he said, when he had told her how he had entered Claudia's service, "there was I, a rat in one of Mag's mouse-traps, poor old woman, with a cat to watch me. But I'm a rat the cats are not made to kill. 'Twasn't long, I can tell you, before I began to be Fly-eyed Jack again. The fool of a girl! I kept my light burning rather late the second night, and I thought I heard——"

"You were in the cellar," interrupted Zelda, scornfully.

"Where else the devil should I be? I *was* in the cellar, and I thought I heard a dress move behind a door. But what could I think my lady the painter should be doing out of her warm bed down there? The next night I felt sure: three nights after I knew I was being watched and followed all day and all night. She wasn't made for a detective, not she. I thought for a minute it might be her whim, just to see I wasn't cheating her, or anything that way; but when I thought again, 'twas queer. And all the while she was as soft to me as her own hand. Who's this Miss Brandt, thinks I, a lady born, that hires a lone house in Old Wharf Side, and follows about a poor unfortunate fellow as if she was soft on him? If she'd look after me, I'd ask about her. It made me slap my leg to hear she was the merchant's girl that broke her leg and was mended by—Doctor Vaughan."

"By Doctor Vaughan?"

"By him, and nobody else; and what's more, there was town talk he'd marry her. I got that from the landlord of the George, that used to know—well, a son of mine. Yes, I'm a father, though you mightn't think it to see how I wear. So now I was as sharp as her own needle. I dodged her about, trick for trick; but I had to find my money first

before I showed her my heels. Now comes the devilry—read that there. That's what I found in her desk ready for posting. So I just thought it best to make a copy. Oh you can't read yet, can't you, for all your living with earls and doctors? Then just listen here—who it's to I don't know—but listen. 'Lose no time in coming down. The man is in the house now, and suspects nothing. He entered my service in a false name, and gave a false account of himself. He spends all his time in the cellar. I know he is searching thoroughly, for I laid a sovereign under a brick, and next morning it was gone. *He was the woman's own husband*: the old woman told me of her son, you know. I searched, and he is, or was, the son of Aaron Goldrick and of Margaret Romani, who were married in the parish church of Marshmead. Margaret Romani was the housekeeper of Squire Maynard, and he was a pedlar. That was notorious. There are suspicions and a connecting link at once. But there is more than that. I have found, what with your identification, which we can say was held back in order not to put the real murderer on his guard, or for other reasons we can think of, will convict him if there is any justice or common sense in England—and if not, there is Lord Lisburn's case to come afterwards. Do you come down and arrest him here. The conclusive proof of his guilt that I speak of, apart from your identifying him, is that——"

"Well?" asked Zelda, dreamily.

"Confound her—just as I had copied so far, in she comes on tip-toe. She saw what I was about as plain as Peter, but made believe to be as blind as a mole—so then I saw what was up. She hadn't seen me copying nor reading, but I was huddling the desk up when I heard her dress in the passage, and hadn't time to make all square. 'I'm going into the country for a day, John,' she says as sweet as sugar. 'All right, my lady'—so off she went, and I followed at a respectful distance behind. And where did her trail lead but to you and Harold Vaughan? By the lame devil, Zelda, if you've been telling tales and that letter's to you—for there's no one else on earth was by—I'll brain you as I brained Mag, if I swing twice over."

"I?" said Zelda. "What have I to do with Her? As sure as I live, though I hate you, you are safe from me. Only leave me alone. I have put my husband between him and her. Why do you come to me?"

"What have you to do with her? You blind mole! Ask yourself what she has to do with the Doctor if she swings me. Hasn't she been working for him because she's fond of him? Hasn't he been fond of her? If he could have got her, do you think a Gorgio gentleman 'd have been strolling about the country with the likes of you? Isn't she after him this minute to ask him to marry her for what she's done for him?—for I don't guess that nothing for nothing is the way with the Gorgios any more than with the Roma. No, no—we're in the same boat, my girl; if she lives, she'll swing me and she'll whistle off your swell, and then—well, you'll be sorry, I suppose. *If she lives—that's*

what I say. And I count she must live and do her worst," he said with a whine. "I daren't show my nose any more—it's all up with Fly-eyed Jack, any-how. But I'm real Rom, I am, and I won't be meat for a Gorgio hangman. Look there, my girl—I mean to tramp on while I can, and puzzle the fools. But when I'm driven down to a corner—and if she lives I shall in a week, may-be—I thought of that as I came along and went into a doctor's shop and bought what I put into this here bottle, that'll do you know what for you know who. I'll swallow it in a ditch, and then they may do what they like. It'll be all one to Fly-eyed Jack then—he'll have conjured himself under ground. If she lives, it'll be *Felo de Gibbet* or *Felo de Se*."

Zelda felt as if turned to ice—but not for him.

"Read me the letter again. What does she know? what does she mean?"

"Ah, if I knew that, the old fox would laugh at the young hen. It means she's spotted the thimble, that's all. It's no good; I'm a broken, hunted down old man; nothing's gone right with me since I took to the managing line. That's ruin—ruin—black and blue. No, 'twasn't your fault, my girl, though you would take my chair at supper. I forgive you—when a man's going to drink off that bottle he can't think of little things. You know the stuff: 'twas my poor old mother's, and there was nobody like her for mixing gruel. She kept it for *drabbing bala*—for the pigs and such like—little she knew 'twould be good for her son! Ah, those old women knew a thing or two, when the crowners weren't so sharp, and people just drank what came, and slept for the long night, and there was an end. 'Tisn't bad—it's rather good in brandy—a few drops 'll do. It makes you giddy and faint, and reel, and then drunk and jolly, and then you go in no time.* The rope—no, thank you, my lord Judge, not for Fly-eyed Jack when he can do the trick by leger-de-main."

"Tell me—why do you come to me?"

"I thought you might have been telling tales, that's all. But you're a good girl, Zelda, a very good girl. Only take care of that girl—she's brewing mischief. I always meant right by you, Zelda—indeed I did; we always were in the same boat, and we're in the same now. Hulloo—there go your dog's ears. Come—take a fellow's hand, just for old times."

"You are a blackguard *Tshor*, and I hope you'll be hanged," she said, while her whole body quivered and her face turned white. "Be off with you to the Devil."

He threw her a last look with his evil eyes and departed—I trust not according to her commands, for I doubt if those who act blindly because

* The late Mrs. Goldrick, or more probably one of her fore-mothers, had probably invented some ingenious decoction of the *Atropa Belladonna*, or Deadly Nightshade. But chemists, like most people, are not unlike Horatio in the matter of philosophy.

they have no eyes are to be blamed over-much because they cannot see. I do not trust that he cheated the hangman any more than I hope that the tiger may cheat the hunter; but that with him, as with his wife, Death may expiate all errors—or let us call them sins—I will both hope and believe with certain of the Rabbis, without much caring whether the creed be orthodox or no.

He was gone; but with singular carelessness after having taken so much trouble, he left his bottle on the floor. It was a small, flat, glass travelling flask, with a cork stopper, and the contents looked like water, but had a singularly unpleasant and pungent odour. It was the vintage of death, and that she knew. But she did not send it after Claudia's coins.

CHAPTER X.

“PÆTE, NON DOLET.”

ZELDA had not the faintest sympathy with her old friend Aaron. He might be hanged on the gibbet like a man, or die in a ditch like a dog, for anything she cared, and the sooner the better—he would intrude with his evil eyes upon her new life no more. But Claudia, her old rival—was the “at last” ever to be postponed even after apparent fulfilment; and was there to be no life, new or old, secure from intrusion by her? It was true that her husband had now become all her own by that mysterious bond of marriage in which she had been taught to trust: but in spite of her recent happiness she had felt that something was wanting, and that while Claudia lived, the something could never wholly come. It was a terrible thought that, after all, her husband might only have bestowed upon her the shell of a soul to which Claudia, by right of a first irrevocable gift, had a right even stronger than her own.

Putting herself in her rival's place she thought:

“I, Claudia,”—as if it had been I, Zelda—“gave him all Me before he had ever seen this girl: he gave me all Him. Fortune parted us; I denied her right, and have conquered Fortune. Who is Zelda to stand any more between us now—the girl who could do nothing but give you her love and her black face when I have given you back all things you have lost—myself and more? I am fair, and beautiful, and wise: she is dark, and little, and ugly, and cannot even read. She can only love you and be your slave; I can be your sword and your shield. You were hers because you were unhappy; your happiness is mine, and is for me. You were hers for want of me, but you cannot take back your soul.

“But no,” she exclaimed almost aloud, as she rose up and threw back her scarlet hood from her hair. “I, too, have earned his soul with love that was poured out freely, and was not held back until the sky was clear. I shared the storm with him—I have a right to share the sunshine, from whatever hands it comes; and if the sunshine must dry up the storm we share together, then let it never come. Not she, not any

woman, can give him love like mine, and the rain of love is better, even for him, than her cold sunshine. I can give him the better part—if she were only dead and underground or above the skies, I should have no fear. I would love him till the rain of love, though ceaseless, made the flowers spring that sunbeams wither and that smell the sweetest in showers. He should teach me all things—life would give time enough—till I became only less wise than he. I would not fear when she became less and I more to him day by day, if only there were no hideous chance of his beholding again her blue eyes and yellow hair, and of her tempting him back to that world I am teaching him to forget, and that I hate with all my soul. I will not give him up: he is mine now for ever. If she were only dead—if she had only never been born!"

What, indeed, would she not do to keep him now? She had become rich and great—that had failed. She had degraded herself, she had ruined him, she had been ready to commit any crime for him—and could she remove her hand from the plough now, when there only stood between her and him one last furrow before the field of love was fully sown that she might spend all the rest of her life-time in harvesting? Claudia might glean a few ears of memory, and welcome; to have triumphed over a rival would have formed part of her joy. Besides, marriage had given her a right to defend her own—even to death if need be.

It is just possible that if she had not been the child of Herr Maynard and Marietta Romani, if she had been to school, had heard sermons, had broken up her capacities for passion in ball-room flirtations, had read books and newspapers, had been brought up outside the kingdom of temptation, and had been, in short, somebody else, that—she would have been somebody else. I do not think I can go farther. I am the biographer of Zelda, and do not pretend that there are not many better members of society. But then good members are made to order—Zelda was made only in so far as she had been born. One judges a stone fresh from the quarry for its possibilities as raw material, and does not blame it for not being cut as well or as badly as the Koh-i-noor, which has been adapted for men's admiration or otherwise by men's hands.

The lurcher had pricked up his ears for his master and his master's apprentice, who was his mistress's master. Zelda, while the old gipsy went aside to tether his ass in a convenient feeding-place, crept up to the tinker's apprentice beseechingly.

"Harold," she implored, "tell me—am I enough for you?"

He looked down upon her gently.

"Do you doubt it, Zelda? Is not a whole woman's life enough for any man?"

"Could you ever change—could you ever leave me for a woman who loved you less than I——"

"Are you not my wife, Zelda? Could I ever wish to leave you?"

"Never?"

"Never."

"Come what may?"

"Never—come what may. Why do you ask me now?"

"I like to hear you say so—that's all. I have been so long alone—and by oneself one thinks of everything—when I'm with you I only think of you."

"Don't be foolish any more, then—be quite sure."

She did not feel the want of passion in his tone, but was half-content again.

"And when," she asked, "are we going on? Weren't we to move to-day?"

"We were," he answered, and her face fell; "but see there what work we have to do, and all before to-morrow. We must make up a forge, and hammer half the night through."

The battle must be fought, then. "You are quite sure," she said, yet more beseechingly, "that you will let me love you always? That you will never be tired of my loving you?"

"Always and always—never and never. There—will that please you?"

How could she, who trusted his every word, withhold her belief from what she so longed to believe?

The old gipsy returned. She took the fowl from the pot, and when the meal was over the two men prepared for work—the apprentice had inoculated the master with some of his own energy—and Zelda seated herself on the end of the wall to look on. She was no longer unhappy, but she listened to every distant sound, for she knew who was coming to break in upon their peaceful days of rest and labour. Oh, if they could only have escaped before that hateful fair woman's hour was due! Fate seemed to be ever against her, never with her, and only to slumber in order that its attacks might be renewed. The evening felt close and oppressive, as if in sympathy with her own mood—when does Nature, the mother, friend, and consoler of us all, ever fail to sympathise at once with all her children? To one, her rain is like sunshine; to another, her sunshine like a storm. Claudia felt no oppression in the air when, having left her conveyance in the road, she came up the hillside of the common. No turf was ever so springy, no breeze so fresh and pure. If she had not come to find love, she had come to find its best reward—she had come to give back to her lover all he had lost, and if he cared not to claim her willing hand, she could return to find some other work and duty, with a sigh, indeed, but with a heart that all the blows of misfortune had hardened as blows harden steel, and not broken, as they break crystal. Zelda, like a tigress, began to crouch together for the final struggle. Claudia came up the hill like Una, or like him who had

The strength of ten,
Because his heart was pure.

Carol was with her, as before. How he managed to be for ever and always at her beck and call, was probably more than he himself knew. He never even suggested a renewal of his suit, but threw himself light-heartedly—as if assured of Claudia's triumph—into the cause of Harold Vaughan. He had at once rejected all thought of consideration for himself in his intended appearance at Aaron's trial.

"Let them call me coward and cur," he had said to her, "I'll be as true as you are. I'll let them call me so, but we'll do better, Sempronius—that is, Miss Brandt, I mean—we *won't* deserve it. *You* shan't call me so, anyway."

It was an intensely picturesque scene that met Claudia's artist-eye as she reached the level, and then looked down into the little hollow scooped just over its lee shoulder. The sun was setting, and the gorse and heather were just changing from gold and purple into rosy grey. Beyond stretched a broad valley, with a lake-like river of dull silver in the middle distance, and beyond that a dark, softly-outlined chain of hills, and beyond that the evening glow. In front of all was the low tent, like the last touch of peace upon a peaceful scene, with three human figures to give human interest—the grey-haired gipsy blowing up his fire, the young man stripped to the shirt and with bare arms standing by, and the little scarlet-hooded girl perched on the end of the rough stone wall, at whose feet the lurcher was basking in a dog's dream of a Valhalla of eternal hares. For sound, the rooks' rearguard was cawing restward, the grasshoppers were saying good-night, and the June-beetles good-morning, while the brook was finding his quiet voice that was lost by day.

It needed no dog to tell Zelda of the approach of her enemy. Claudia had scarcely caught sight of the scarlet hood than it disappeared among the bushes. Harold Vaughan looked up, and found himself face to face with Claudia. Carol nodded to him and waved his hand from a distance, but let Claudia go forward, and sat down to kill time by whistling on the softest mound he could find.

The old gipsy also looked up and saw the lady. Harold Vaughan excused himself hurriedly, and went forward. She held out her hand—he just touched it. Why had she come back to trouble him when he was doing his utmost to believe her part of a vanished dream, and to forget her for Zelda's sake and her own?

"I have wonderful news—good news—for you," Zelda heard her say from behind the bush. "It will not keep an instant. Where can I speak to you?" and Zelda saw the drawing-mistress and the tinker's apprentice move aside.

The poor girl had long ago given up all idea of being a conventional lady, and it will be remembered that she had never regarded eaves-dropping as unbecoming that complex character. She followed them with her eyes, till she traced them to a gorse-covered mound, and then, throwing off her tell-tale scarlet, followed them, keeping almost as

close to the ground as one of the rabbits that were just coming out to their evening parties. They had so much start of her that she could not hear all they had to say, but she was in time for much more.

Not to feel for Harold Vaughan would be to be pitiless indeed, whether he is accounted weak or strong, blameless or blameable. Claudia told her story simply, and without a word that might seem as though she had put herself forward more than everyone is bound to do who hates injustice and will not have the innocent suffer for the guilty. But he could not fail to see through her modest disguise. She too, like Zelda, had devoted herself to him; but how? One had suffered ruin to fall upon him, in order that she might become his sole remnant of the world; the other had triumphantly devoted herself to the task of saving him from ruin. While Zelda had been creating dangers and troubles, she had quietly braved them and won—she had enabled him to offer her once more an unruined life and a stainless name. And now the cup was offered him only to be dashed from his lips once more. If he had only been faithful indeed—if only through good and ill, through hope and despair, through honour and shame alike he had been true to her, even when her image became dim, dreamlike, and unattainable—even when to hope for her seemed folly, and constancy itself put on the disguise of a sin!

But it was too late. He knew that she loved him—he had never ceased to love her. With her, and with the regained honour due to her, he might face the world again, and re-enter bravely upon his career—his battle with his own ill-fortune and the world's sickness and sorrow. Poor Zelda! Though she loved him, what could she ever be to him any more? She would destroy his life, and give him nothing but her love in return: and what was that to him? But he was not bound to Claudia, and he was bound to Zelda—by chains that, he knew as well as she, needed not the church's sanction or the law's to make them firmer when riveted on the wrists of an honest man. It was too late indeed.

He sat by Claudia's side in mute despair. But how could any man, however strong, however honest—for what man has the strength of a god or angel?—how could any man face such a future without flinching?—how could he be expected to rivet such chains upon his own wrists with his own hands?

I know not what words Claudia expected from him when she had ended her story, and had told how it only wanted Aaron's certain capture and conviction to remove the last lingering shadow from his name. I do know the words he burned to say; but what need to tell what must now be never breathed? He sat in silence, and—it must be owned—thought how, with a good conscience, he could break his chains. He was not married to Zelda after all—what sin could there be, if he must at last be driven to exercise his Free Will and grasp Fortune by the throat, in preferring her whom he loved to her who only loved him? Something told him, indeed, that Claudia could bear the choice, and that Zelda could not bear it—that

he was as responsible for Zelda's future as if he were the actual creator of her soul. Zelda, after all, his conscience whispered, had given him most, for Claudia would still have kept back much; she would never have yielded her truth, her courage, her very inmost soul of souls, even for love's sake; while Zelda, if she had had them, would have yielded them all—nay, have thrown them at his feet, and have let him trample them into the ground.

But if "Too Late" was the sum of all his life to him, past, present, and to come, what swords were left in language to pierce Zelda's heart as she listened to the latter half of Claudia's tale? She who had wrested her rival's secret, almost *clairvoyante*-fashion, from her in London, found it an easy task to read between the lines now. All was as she had feared, and far beyond. Nor could she fail to read yet worse than the utmost she had feared—her husband's attitude of silent despair. She, who knew every turn of his face, saw into his heart even more clearly than into that of her fellow-woman. And even yet she did not despair—if only Claudia were not alive. What were his own very last words—that his life was hers, come what may? Claudia was a serpent in the road, that stood between her and happiness, between him and her. Her heart began to throb so violently that she feared its beatings might be heard. She laid her hand upon it, and felt the glass flask that Aaron had left in her way. Was this the hand of fate also? Was it chance or was it some friendly spirit that had armed her so seasonably with such a sword?

How could she doubt? She was indeed Sylvia, and the lives of Sylvia and Falkenstein were in her hands. A few drops brought to Claudia in an innocent cup of spring water would do more than save Aaron from the gallows by ridding him of his active foe. It would clear her last furrow, and remove the last cloud from her sky. They had driven her soul to bay at last—let them know what she would do to save her soul.

"I will destroy her for his sake," she thought. "He shall not lose a love like mine for all else in the world. She may give him all things, but I can give him all, and more than all."

She had never heard of "Thou shalt do no murder;" and in truth her plight was sore. After being raised so unexpectedly, so gloriously, to the very topmost pinnacle of supreme happiness, it was indeed too much for her flesh and blood to bear. So great was her agony that it amounted to almost unbearable pain, and the two lovers—for such, in spite of all things, they were—must have been intensely absorbed with themselves and their own troubles not to have heard her almost betray her presence by an audible moan. It was not without anguish that even she could reach happiness by staining her hands with blood, even though she would never have blamed Claudia for doing the same by her.

She pressed the flask more closely to her bosom, as if to quell the pain; she never doubted for an instant since the idea had grown up from its root and taken a definite form. It would be so easy—and then no more Claudia, no one but Harold all the rest of her days.

"What was that?" asked Claudia, starting: "did I not hear a noise?"

Her voice broke the spell that transformed Harold into a statue of doubt and despair. It might be the act of a scoundrel to break with Zelda, but hope could not all be dead while Claudia was there by his side; and how could he, in any case, bear to feel that she would leave him there for ever, after all she had done, believing him to be ungrateful, unfaithful, all things that men and women most despise?

"Claudia," he asked at last, "what should you think of a man who—deserted and friendless as I thought myself—not daring to go to her, even, from whom he thought himself cut off for ever by all men's condemnation——"

"You dared not come to *me*? But I understand—I should have done the same!"

"What should you think of him if—a girl that he had hated and scorned, a large-souled woman, who had given him love for hate and worship for scorn; had given up rank, wealth, and fame for him, and had said I will be your sister—your friend——"

Claudia trembled in her turn. "I should have loved her, and thanked her, and I will. Who was she?"

"If the woman—how can I tell you, Claudia?—had given up all these things for the man, caring for nothing but him alone—if they two were alone in the whole world—if she had made herself so utterly dependent upon him that he owed her the devotion of a life in return for hers—if to leave her would be to destroy her—what should he have done?"

"I guess what you mean," said Claudia, in a low tone.

"Should you call it faithlessness to his one love, if he gave its dead ashes—as he was bound to think them—to one to whom fate had thus bound him——"

"I should not call it faithlessness—no, but I should call it—well, I must say it—despair." Was it this, then, she had come to hear? Claudia was not the less to be pitied because she was best able to bear. What is strength of soul but a larger capacity for suffering? Zelda, who heard all, was enraged at her rival's apparent coldness, and pressed her flask harder still. A woman had no right to live who contained herself at such a confession from Harold Vaughan.

"But—if this was all in error—if he found that to give his life where he could not give his heart would make all unhappy—if nothing any longer stood between him and her he loved, and had always loved, but that mistaken thing you have guessed—What then? Must he wreck the happiness of all three—of two women and one man—because he had been too weak to wait for the triumph of truth——"

"He must be indeed unhappy," sighed Claudia. "But all things must be looked in the face—even this thing. There is nothing in this life too hard for man to bear, too fearful to be met bravely. I understand you. I will not say how well. . . . He is married to this girl?"

"By no church—by no law. He may leave her to forget him; he may guard her still, but——"

"But the bond you speak of—is it his word?"

"His error—his wretched doubt—his cowardice—his despair. Claudia—I must say it—I love you, more even than in the old days—more even than when the words were on my tongue, when——"

"No more of this, Harold. Do you wish to kill me? You love me, you say. Then be strong and brave, and follow duty; that is the only love I know. God knows," she said, forgetting at last her life-long self-restraint, "I would give up all things, even myself, for you, and I will. But by you I mean your honour, which is my life—which I made my life ever since that terrible day. You are not bound to me, not even by gratitude. To her you are bound, if I understand you rightly, by all that can bind a man to a woman—by her devotion, her love, and your word—by everything I can dream of. You speak of unhappiness. You must think first of hers, last of yours and of mine. Well, my happiness is in knowing you to be—all that I have always known you were."

"Claudia—I cannot—you are bidding me more than man can do. My strength is my love for you. Do you not love me, then, after all?"

"God knows I do. I need make no secret of it now. I have loved you more than you ever knew."

Even Zelda thought her cold no more. She pressed the flask still closer. What was yet to come?

"And yet," began Harold, "you say you love me, and yet——"

"And yet—no, therefore, I tell you to do by her, whoever she may be—I will not even ask who—all that you owe to honour. You owe me nothing—her all; and I have learned enough to know that happiness does not come of seeking it—does not come of striving for it—perhaps to most of us—to me, to you, never comes at all, but there is always what is right and what is wrong. I shall have more to bear than you, dear Harold, and for your sake I will bear it all to the end. Yes, if you are faithless now to her, you are faithless to me."

"And for this shadow of a tie——"

"A shadow—do you call love a shadow? And how great hers must be!"

Harold groaned aloud. "And is this tie all? If it were not for that you would let me give my life where my heart is——"

"Ah, that if! If only all things were not as they are, wrong might be right, perhaps, and right be wrong."

"But—do not let me be quite miserable—give me one ray of light in my darkness. You are right—I own it; there is but one way left to be worthy of you. Only let me have the wretched comfort that if it had not been too late—if it were not for this bond of honour——"

Poor Zelda! Might marriage, then, prove to be not a bond of love, but only of honour, after all?

"If it were not for his bond of honour," he went on, "it is you who

might have been my wife—the word I must hate evermore—and that it is not want of your love that parts us, but hideous duty?"

"Have you not long been answered? I can say no more. But hideous duty? Is that the word of Harold?"

"Forgive me—I am going mad, I believe."

"Harold, it must be. We must bow to what God wills, and wait for the end. Promise me one thing for my sake."

"All things."

"Be kind and true to her, brave and strong for her, as you would have been for me. I do not say it will give you happiness—nor me—but it will give us both all the work on earth that man or woman needs. It is for my sake. Perhaps—perhaps—one day—but not here—we may meet again." She had broken down at last, but even then her heart was firm.

"Promise me, dear Harold," she said again.

He took her hand, and the promise, though unspoken, was sealed. The promise was their good-bye.

But Zelda? Alas! which love looked the greater, after all? I know not how to tell the rest. Claudia, for very Love's sake, was giving him up to one who held her death in her hand. What natural heart is not touched to its quick by the revelation of a grander soul? Even thus her rival must not triumph over her—his happiness must come from no hands but her own. She, she who loved him with all her mind and strength, heart, body and soul, was the one stumbling-block in the way of his happiness which all her passion burned to ensure. There was no thought of jealousy, no shadow of blame—she had read Claudia's heart, and had understood it all. Love, then, was something still unknown, and she must prove it all. It was she who must still love him the most—even Claudia's love must be out-done.

Slowly she followed them back as they returned to the tent, with her eyes fixed on him. They were as silent as she, for all their hearts were full. They reached the tent at last. Harold pressed Claudia's hand for the last time. It was then that Zelda joined them, as though she had come from some other way. Claudia saw her, and that she was Pauline. She came to her and took her hand.

"Be good to him," she said, softly. Zelda kissed the hand, and formed with her lips the words "I will."

"Will the lady take nothing?" asked the old gipsy. "They should break bread with us, who come from far to see the Queen. You are fair and handsome, my lady: you must have many good years."

She gave him a piece of money. "A glass of water," she said, "and then I will go."

"I will fetch it," said Zelda. The old gipsy noticed something in her tone.

"No—not you," he said. "I'll go." But she was gone.

She took two horn cups and went to the brook, knelt down, and kissed the ground. It was Mother Earth to whom she was praying—her nurse and her refuge: the last quiet cradle of us all.

But she was a born actress, and she was an actress to the end. Without a touch of the theatre, without the thought of a hundred and seventy-seventh bouquet, not indeed of camellias and violets like those of old, but of forget-me-nots and pansies, perhaps, or—it might be—of immortelles, even death would not be Zelda's. She filled the cups: into one she poured the draught that had not been mixed for her. Carol watched her with idle curiosity, and joined her as she returned.

"We've had many a quarrel, haven't we, us two?" she asked him with a gentle smile. "I cheated you with my red cloak, though, although you're the cleverest man in the world. Good-bye, old fellow—we're not like to quarrel now." To the old gipsy she said, as she passed him, "You've been so good, I've got a thought you'll mind what I say if I ever died before I'm old—I'd like to be buried, if they'd let me, just here where we've all been happy together so long." She smiled so sweetly that he smiled at her girl's fancy, and let her go by. Harold Vaughan was not at hand; he had said good-bye to Claudia, and must see the last of her unseen. Then she gave the cup to Claudia, who drank it like one in a fever. And then Zelda put her own lips to the other cup she had filled.

Harold Vaughan, whose soul, now finally overcome, was listlessly contemplating the first star that rose behind the tent, was suddenly startled and brought back to earth by a cry. His surgeon's presence of mind returned—he ran forward. The cry must have been either Claudia's or Zelda's—it was Zelda's. He saw her throw her arms forward, and reel backwards into the arms of Carol. Throwing his own arm round her, he laid her down upon earth, and then read *Poison* as legibly as if it had been printed on her cold brow. But, once more, it was too late, and he had no remedies at hand. Such as he could extemporise he used—but the witch's potion, compounded he knew not how, had done its work far too well. As Aaron had foretold, she turned first giddy, then faint: her large eyes dilated and sparkled; her face flushed—before the fierce pains came on she grew radiantly beautiful. At last delirium rendered her unconscious of pain. She was Sylvia, Zelda, Pauline, all in turn and all in one, as she had been in her real life's dream. But the delirium also passed away before she died.

She reached out her hand. Claudia, though blind with tears, took it, and placed it in that of Harold Vaughan. She turned her large, bright, dying eyes on Harold; but her last words were for Claudia.

"It was because I loved him," she said triumphantly. "Be good to him, and care for him half as well as me."

Was this also a barren life, only fit to perish and to be put to sleep in Mother Earth's sweet cradle among the hidden blossoms that no man sees? Or was it with her, the self-slain, as with the poor corn-weed, that death was needed to save and to reveal? If so, who would pity her that she passed away with her sacrifice dimly guessed at and unknown?

With such a radiance on her cheek,
 Such glory in her eyes,
 With lips whose very tremblings speak,
 How can ye say "She Dies"?
 How can ye dream that here the light
 Of life with death is blent
 When blindness grows more clear than sight,
 And silence, eloquent?

With angel voices in her ears
 How should she stoop to ours?
 How should she weep with earthly tears
 Who smiles on heavenly flowers?
 How should we wish that prayer or vow
 Her lingering should renew—
 That she, who sings with seraphs now,
 Should speak again with you?

Then pass, lest life should mock belief
 In love, with love's alloy—
 Oh pass, lest thou shouldst share our grief
 Who cannot share thy joy.
 'Tis o'er—the crowning thorns of pain
 By us, not her, are won—
 Our tears, to her, are morning rain—
 Our night, her risen Sun.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

THE FIFTY-THIRD CARD.

WHAT is more glorious on earth or in air than a sea-breeze? Earth, where Harold fought, and Claudia conquered, and Zelda died, not *au revoir*, but *à Dieu*!

Lord Lisburn tarried long enough on the weary shore to give his hand to his old friend, to ensure him the medical patronage of all the generation of Perrotts and Penroses—much forgiving when pardon is sued by an earl for his friend—and to congratulate him on his engagement to Claudia Brandt. Every doctor should be a married man to get on well with that class of patients, and who could make a better doctor's wife than she? But he was not the first to offer his congratulations. Carol was beforehand.

"Miss Brandt," he said to her one day, "you once made me a promise. I know you're going to be married to the man I made what he is, but that doesn't prevent my being head over ears in love with you all the same. You once told me that if something happened you would let me kiss your hand."

"Both, if you like," answered Claudia. Dr. Vaughan was not jealous, and Carol was satisfied, though still the poorest man in the world.

And then, at last, for the *Esmeralda*.

Lord Lisburn was not able so readily as Harold Vaughan—for to the latter the tender twilight between forgetting and remembering was made easy—to thrust from his heart the gipsy beggar girl whom he had loved more dearly than she ever knew or cared to know. It was he who, while he lived, kept her memory fresh and green. To have loved her strange caprices and mysterious ways as he had loved them meant to find no consolation thenceforth in common-place Janes or Lauras. I forget, though—the *Esmeralda* was the *Esmeralda* no longer. He must be the husband of no other than Pauline, in spite of all. He went back to his old craze, and sailed at last in the *Pauline* on that long-talked-of voyage, to find the North Pole. The sea is the home for sorry hearts, and Lord Lisburn felt the salt air sweep through him with a rush of rough welcome.

It is there that Zelda's Fortune began, and there it shall end. After all, this has been but the story of a box of gold, like ninety-nine life-stories out of every hundred. It is from the metal which is at once the noblest and the ignoblest of all metals from which the romance of the future must compile its largest volume, unless it wishes to lose the higher fidelity to human nature which belongs to the free air of romance alone, and of which the polished mirror of realism reflects only the outer and unessential accidents. Avarice is as real a passion as love itself, and has not every human passion its ideal and poetical side? Do crimes, virtues, heroisms, self-sacrifices, all the paraphernalia of romance as it is—not sentiments, but passions—spring from a forcing-house of rhyming words, or from a soil of gold? The money-box is no mere target for satire; it is an altar, round which the passions move in their discordant chorus. But the most awful part of the matter is, that while gold is a poetic reality it is no natural reality. There is a world in which it is false as well as a world in which it is true. Nor is this a mere truism. Zelda belonged to the ungolden world—her element was the golden age which was not of gold. Sylvia had been a natural woman—a savage, if you please—suddenly thrown into the midst of the gold-wired cage in which we dwell. Zelda was the same—a last dying protest of the old romance against the new. What becomes of the lark when imprisoned in a golden cage, and made to feed on unchosen food? He mostly breaks his heart, I believe. He is bewildered with his wires, and will not understand they are gold, even if the neighbouring parrots, content with their captivity, prate to him that they are pure gold all day long.

For the present, Mrs. Goldrick's money-chest, from which the soul was missing, and which had given so many people such a long and barren chase in such divergent directions and to such unconnected ends, was, so far as concerns all these things and more, the beginning, the middle, and the end.

Lord Lisburn did not nail the Union Jack to the top of the North Pole. He did not meet Egin. He did not discover the earthly Paradise. But one morning he, or rather the mate of the *Pauline* for him, found a

bottle, which contained a letter to a dead man. Lord Lisburn, at the first opportunity, sent it to Claudia Vaughan, the daughter of him to whom it was directed.

"Honoured Sir," it began, "this is to acquaint you, if it comes to hand, that the *Gustavus* of Stockholm, in which I am a passenger, cannot live till morning in this weather. Meant to write from New York, but mayn't have a chance after now. Only chance left is to make a clean breast of it—*may* stop the squall. If it does, I'll tear up this and write from New York when I have time." After telling, in unconnected and hurried sentences, how he had managed to get Mr. Brandt into serious complications while at Rotterdam, the writer went on: "Please tell mother I've got her gold and notes—all safe—only borrowed it out of her box to get here. If I get to New York, send back by degrees. Tell her to put in bank next time. Called off to the pumps. Really meant to write from New York and make] all square, and will—on my honour. Must go. Yours, Sir, obediently, LUKE GOLDRICK.

"For A. Brandt, Esq., St. Bavons, England."

Thus there is an unseen player in every human game. If it had not been for a man whom we have never seen and of whom scarcely one of the rest had ever heard, all these lives would have differed as widely as if Marietta Romani herself had never been born. It is useless even to overlook our neighbours' hands. The game we have to play includes a FIFTY-THIRD CARD that needs must set all our most skilful reckoning wrong.

Poor Zelda! She would never have died and have been buried among the unseen weeds, without so much as a word of thanks for dying to make others happy or a tear of real love, had they whom it concerned known what alone the spirits of the depths of ocean knew—that Zelda's Fortune had from the very beginning been at the bottom of the sea.

Yet which of all these, from Claudia to Harold, from Harold to Zelda, from Zelda to the Cornflower, from the Cornflower to Aaron himself, had been faithless to the light that was his or hers? As the doggerel goes—

Praise no man till he dies? Nay, even so
Blame no man while he lives, in aught. For lo,
The self-same thing these sin, those sinless, call—
Each *may* be right; then why not each—and All?

